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TOPSY, M.P.

By the Same Author

LAUGHING ANN
SHE-SHANTIES
PLAIN JANE
RIVERSIDE NIGHTS
(with Nigel Playfair)
THE TRIALS OF TOPSY

TOPSY, M.P.

BY

A. P. HERBERT

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PRINTED
IN
GREAT BRITAIN

DEDICATED WITH RESPECT

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN

SIR LESLIE SCOTT

AND

SIR WILLIAM BULL

These letters are reprinted here by the courteous permission of the Proprietors of *Punch*, for which I thank them.—A. P. H.

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TOPSY, M.P.

LETTER I

BECOMES A MEMBER

TRIX, my cruel angel, I will *not* be upbraided in that *corrosive* way, my dear how *could* I write to you, if you *will* go *wafting* about the world in *yachts,* my dear I've ſtarted the *longeſt* letter *oceans* of times, but then I always thought O well where *is* China, and by the time she gets this she *won't* be there and anyhow the news will be *too* obsolete, so in the end the pen *quite* fell from the little fingers, besides darling you know you never *uttered* yourself except that *rather* aloof picture-poſtcard from the ROCKEFELLER yacht, but *don't* think darling there's the *paleſt* cloud between us, because we're the old old bosoms ſtill and you shall hear the *whole* proceedings *daily* darling.

But my dear it's *too* dreary to hear you're ſtill a Veſtal, I did think you'd magnetise in one of those tropical climes, however life *undulates* before you ſtill darling so don't hurry the ſtroke, because my dear I'm *satisfied* that matrimony is a thing a girl ought to commit *once* only and then well, as for me I'm the *born* matron already, well no tiny tots yet for which thanks be, but my dear utterly

poised and *mature* and my dear *too* wifely, my dear we're *crazily* harmonious ſtill and we've only had the *moſt* trivial tantrums except one which *was* rather cyclonic, I'll tell you one day, but as far as I can see the *sole* flaw in conjugality is that at *any* moment a girl may be guilty of *twins* because my dear I'm *quite* sure that your generous Topsy is the type that *twins* if anything, so you can underſtand they *are* rather a *background* to a girl's thoughts, and that will explain if I seem a *fraction* more esotteric and autumnal in tone from time to time these days darling.

Well of course we had *Earth's* roſieſt honeymoon since Adam and Eve, my dear *Jamaica, too* voluptious and hiſtorical, you have *nothing* but *yams* and *rum-punch* and *bread-fruit,* and my dear the *humming*-birds are *quite* electrical, well we ſtayed at a *divinely* lotos-eating little place called Montego Bay, my dear if *ever* you descend to matrimony you *muſt* go there and merely *mention* my name because I *rather* think they were *rather* attracted, well we had *Elysian* rooms with the wideſt balcony *quite* over the sea which my dear is the *moſt* theatrical blue with *intoxicating* coral reefs, my dear *live* coral sort of openwork rock in *pink* and *too* ornamental, and the *moſt* tropical little *aquarium* fish all topaz and purple with *orange* ſtripes and everything, and of course the water is *too* diaphanous, well when I tell you that I dropped a

looking-glass from our balcony into six foot of sea and attended to the little nose in it *quite* adequately as it lay at the bottom, and my dear the bathing was *dream-like,* you lie on this miraculous *white* sand with *secret* bottles of coker-nut oil and merely *cook* the little frame by sections, my dear like something on a spit till you go *pure* antelope *all* over, only of course the *hilarious* thing is that the *local* white virgins utterly *shun* the sun and merely *lurk* under umbrellas and everything for fear they 'll go dusky and be taken for *Nature's* Jamaicans, my dear *too* delicate the whole situation, however you recline *comatically* and watch the fifty-fifty girls, my dear the *most* enticing cinnamon colour and *what* figures, doing the *highest* dives upside-down and everything, and after that you sort of *wilt* into the water which is like *blue* velvet a cat 's been lying on, my dear it 's *so* buoyant you 're sort of swimming in the *air,* and of course I had a *languishing* costume in *Cambridge* and ivory with a *marked* absence of *back* darling, and I gave Haddock an *emerald* garment in wool, because my dear I *do* resent this *mourning* uniform men wear in the water, and I do *not* see why one's nearest and dearest should *always* look like a *wet* hansom-cab horse on the beach, do you darling, however *this* one I must admit was the *faintest* shade too *garish* for a male, because it was the last in the shop and quite *remarks* I believe were definitely passed on the sunlit strand about it, however Haddock didn't seem to care a

cabbage, which only shows you darling what *Love* can do to a lord and master, don't you agree?

So what with everything I don't want to hear a *single* word about your *populous* Lidos and *teeming* lingerie parades, because think what you will of me but my dear this tender plant does *not* blossom in *herds* and *hives* and places where they *swarm,* no darling I am *not* the human bee, but small and congenial which was what we had there, because there were a few quite endurable *voiceless* Britons, who *murmured* Good-morning and *whispered* Good-night but didn't utter between, also some *rather* creamy Americans who paid for the rum-punch *quite* always, my dear *too* amenable, however *that* leads me to the *solitary* canker, because one of the Americans was *rather* magical, my dear a *definite* witch, called Mrs. May, and we became *quite* bosoms, only as luck would have it the nymph reminded Haddock of that *Green* attractor I've told you about, and my dear she was *rather* litterary and constantly read *books,* my dear *quite* nothing in it of course only there *was* a second or two when your *radiant* Top felt she had to *definitely* make an effort to *command* attention, and *that* my dear is *not* marked on the map of my life, but *don't* think darling that I'm going to be one of those *bilious* wives, because I've quite decided that if *ever* there's the shadow of Delilah-trouble I'm going to be *too* Christian about it, because my dear you know I

always say that it *always* pays to *always* do the *Chriſtian* thing.

However no more of that now, because my dear of course I 've forgotten to tell you the *real* throb, my dear in *case* you haven't seen I *am litterally* a Member of Parliament, well it was juſt as we expected, my *poor* Haddock was *unseated* owing to some weasel of a man who gave *beer* to the populace, however your Topsy was elected *too* unanimously inſtead, my dear a walking *weed* did ſtand againſt me, but he quite loſt his deposit and everything and was *practically* ſtoned to death, well it all took *months* to fructify and now I can't take my little seat till next Session, of course my poor Haddock is *faintly* wounded I 'm afraid, because meanwhile he 'd made *hiſtory's* virgin speech and was once ejected from the House for calling the man Hicks a cow in a china-shop, so he was *rather* popular, however he 's writing a tragedy or something now and we 've taken a house in *my* conſtituency, only outside Burbleton because my dear *Burbleton, too* morbid, of course one faint flaw is that the *finances* are the leaſt bit tremulous and on the debit side, so Haddock 's doing some ads. as well, well no more now darling, O snakes I nearly forgot, my dear talking of finance there 's a *miſty* chance of my *flying* the large Atlantic, but not a *whisper* darling, because not even Haddock is to know, more later, your *conſtant* angel Topsy.

LETTER II

GOES SHOOTING

My *soul's* thanks Trix for your *fragrant* letter, but my dear I do wish you wouldn't *exaggerate* so, I can't think *what* I said to put such *moonery* into your head, because of course my dear there was *never* a *"row"* or *"incident"* or anything, I *told* you we had *history's* halcyon honeymoon, my dear *too* serene, in fact *some* girls *might* smell the breath of cattery in your suggestions, but I know you don't mean that, however *since* you ask me darling I *will* tell you one thing that happened because it was *rather* laughworthy and I think might be a help and sign-post to *you* darling if ever you snare something as far as the altar.

Only my dear you must register a *virgin's* vow to *never* let my Haddock guess I tell you a *thing* about him, because I *rather* think he'd *rather* resent it, however well my dear the *moment* I saw that he was *quite* noticing this Mrs. May the American, and I must say darling she had high sight-value, though a bit on the *bijou* scale, besides of course reminding Haddock of his Green fairy, the pure passion of the past, my dear they *both* have eyes like the *largest* lavender *pearls,* my dear *my* pathetic little orbs are the merest *beads* beside them, however, thanks be, I am *not* the height of a small-size marionette, *no* darling I'm

not jealous, I *am—not—*a—*jealous—woman,* it *merely* isn't in my *nature,* of course a wife has her *amour propre,* but *what* happened was that, well *Mr.* May who was an Englishman and *rather* a savoury fellow, only he 's one of the gun-brigade my dear *never* happy unless he 's *supplying* the fish-course or murdering a bird, and of course Glory, that 's the wife, yes darling *believe* me *Glory* was the charmer's name, well she was quite a one with a gun as well, my dear she knew about *butts* and she 'd *landed* fish the size of herself, *sardines* I suppose said the young wife tenderly, well my dear on our *laſt* day in Jamaica she turned her lavender lamps on Haddock and said *would* we like to go and shoot *alligators* with them, because *if* one shot any they made the *moſt* Parisian shoes.

Well of course my dear *my* reactions were *too* negative, because you *know* my attitude to gunnery, my dear don't think I 'm flabby about alligators or anything only I definitely had *no* feeling againſt the alligators of Jamaica because it seems they lead *aloof* lives in the mangrove swamps and *quite* never invade the home, besides I *rather* wanted to have a farewell sun-debauch on the sands, well of course Haddock and I are absolute gloves on this subject as a rule, but what was my ſtagger and dismay when I saw him utterly nibbling at the alligator notion, well my dear I did the *Chriſtian* thing forthwith and said that *Haddock* muſt go alligating and *I* would ſtay and suffer on the beach by myself, well then of course

Haddock said that a barrel of *rubies* wouldn't induce him, etcetera, so then I did the double-Christian and said well we 'd *both* go on the shoe-hunt, and Gosh it was so.

Well darling the alligator may be seductive *footwear* but he lives in the *most* alluvial and unsalubrious places, my dear have you *ever* been in a mangrove swamp, my dear Nature at its *most* revolting, well we *all* got into an almost invisible little *flat* boat, my dear a mere *plank,* well *two* would have been a crowd but we had a jet-black Britisher as well to row, May had a gun of course and so had Haddock, but my dear *too* reluctant because it seems he hasn't fingered a firearm since the Battle of *Arras,* and had *quite* forgotten how most of it *functioned,* however he didn't dare to say so and of course Glory insisted on his having her gun, and my dear I did do *rather* an astute chuckle within because I thought he was becoming *rather* lukewarm about the entire proceeding, me likewise darling, well there was a frantic wind and in *two* whiffs we were blown round a corner into the *bowels* of this *insanitary* swamp, my dear I *always* thought a mangrove was a sort of *plant* they put in the chutney, but *these* were absolute *trees,* my dear if you can imagine the *smelliest* forest merely growing in a *deep* drain, and of course the *most* emetical *red* and black *crabs* quite clambering about the branches, my dear too *ventrifugal,* so there we were my dear in that *festering* corner, entirely surrounded by the *slimy* man-

groves, sitting in a *hot* draught, *inhaling* malaria, *black* with mosquitoes and *looking* for alligators, O *Gosh!*

And if that isn't life's most *lowering* situation I don't know what, *because* my dear it seems the *sole* thing you *ever* see of an alligator is *one* eye popping out of the water, and what with the water that day being *too* ruffled by the wind and *fish* popping in *all* directions one saw *platoons* of alligators only they *never* were, and my dear one couldn't *respirate* or blow the little nose for fear of upsetting this *precarious* boat, in *which* case of course there being no ground visible one would *merely* cling to these indecent mangroves and have the legs chewed off by submarine reptiles and the *upper* parts by mosquitoes and crabs, O yes and by the way darling they said that the *pet* habit of the alligator is to pop up *too* near the boat and merely *flick* it over with *one* flick of the scaly tail, my dear I *never* knew a place where there were *so* many agonies at the *same* time, because of course at *any* moment one might be *shot* to death by my *dejected* Haddock, my dear he *sat* there looking *too* unmilitary with the gun on his knees, my dear like a man left alone with a *baby,* and my dear I did pray that no alligator would do the popping act *his* side of the boat because I was *quite* convinced that long before he found the right trigger and everything I should have lost *both* the little uninsured legs.

Too right my dear, because *meanwhile* the *May*

family were merely *living* for the *chase,* my dear *too* voracious, the male May kept whispering *There there* and *hoisting* his weapon, my dear my *nerves,* but it was always only a *tarpon* or something and the Glory creature kept hissing at Haddock *Shoot* man *shoot* and my poor Haddock would peer *too* ferociously in the wrong direction and do *quite* nothing, well at *last* Mr. May *suddenly* made a film face and blew off his rifle, my dear *too* alarming, the boat rocked *madly* and some of the drain came in, well my dear nobody else had seen the *smell* of a reptile but he was *too* sure he 'd hit one, an old hen alligator it seemed darling, and we could have the skin, only it wouldn't come to the surface for *two* days, so I said *Too* thoughtless we 're leaving to-morrow, and of course *Glory* after this was *more* bloodsome than before and *more* and *more* unsatisfied with Haddock, my dear she saw alligators *everywhere,* but *nothing* she said could induce my Haddock to part with his bullet, and what with the *wind* and the *whiff* and the *mosquitoes* and the *crabs* I thought that at *any* moment I should have to *scream* like a spinster, my dear *too* right because just then one of these *obscene* crabs fell *plop* into the boat out of a tree, and my dear I am *not* accustomed to a shower of crabs so I *merely* yelled, the boat *heaved* and my dear *at* that Haddock's gun went off at *last,* well the black man disembarked the crab and my *poor* Haddock looked the *least* bit evasive but he swore he 'd seen

two reptiles and *definitely* hit *one,* well we all said it was *too* bad it wouldn't come up for *two* days, however *Glory* my dear looked *too* incredulous and *disillusioned* and I doubt if they 'll *ever* be *quite* bosoms now, however after that we merely *crawled* out of the swamp *against* the hurricane, my dear *torture,* and my *poor* Haddock couldn't remember *how* to *unload* and everything, well we *both* agreed that it had been the world's *most* noxious expedition and it was a lesson to both of us, but of course the *real* message for you darling is *as* I say that it *always* pays to *always* do etc., so take it to heart your *Christian* little Topsy.

LETTER III

FLIES HALF THE ATLANTIC

TRIX my darling have you *ever* flown the Atlantic, well don't, of course it was all *so* secret I couldn't wire you, and my dear there was no time for *letters,* and of course I *never* know how *much* you read the papers, if any, anyhow you haven't seen the whole story, at least, hopes be, so here 's the whole *degrading* narrative.

Well my dear I *think* I told you once about a *congenitally* redundant Baronet called Sir Charles Chase who showed affection in the dentist's waiting-room, my dear one of the *few* definite *surprises* in this worldly little life, well our paths have never intersected since then, my dear *too* deliberate on my side, but this dog-fish has a son called *Claude* whom I 'd cannoned into once or twice at routs and swarries, quite a congenial cub about supper-time darling only he *will* yap on about these *repugnant* aeroplanes and *dedicates* his life to *zooming* and *stalling* and all that ullage and he was always *yearning* to take me up because my dear from the very first it was *rather* manifest that he was *rather* attracted, only of course Haddock is *too* alienated by the air, to say nothing of Claude, and I 've always been *rather* unanimous so I spurned the youth's petition on monogamous grounds.

However *meanwhile* my dear he got a grip somehow on this moon-affected female you've read about perhaps Miss Lotweed, who has a weakness for all this *neurotic* air-stuff and also for the Rights of Woman and everything, and it seems her *life's* ambition is to finance the *first* London girl to *fly* the Atlantic from *east* to west, because it seems that's the *one* thing wanted to put the *entire* feminine gender on its feet, well of course Claude told her that I was the *world's* little woman for the exploit because I was the *utter* prize-winner in the modern doe class, and besides I should be the *first* bride and the *first* woman M.P. to do the idiot's trick and shatter *masses* of records with a *single* gesture.

Well my dear I met her by chance and the Lotweed *totally* agreed with him at *sight,* my dear *too* impressed, but of course I was *perfectly* aloof about it, because I knew my poor Haddock would *merely* detonate, only my dear *then* it came out that the moon-woman wanted to pay positive *sums* of money to the First Girl etc., my dear she *started* at a thousand, and of course I told you that the Haddock finances have just a *paltry* touch of instability and vagueness, so my dear I began to *dimly* ponder the thing, but of course *too* reluctant, and my dear the woman *sweats* money, and I pointed out I should have to *deceive* my poor Haddock with the wedding-bells still trembling in the belfry, so the price leapt up at once, and so then I said I was *rather* lukewarm about

going to America *at all,* and well to shingle the story somewhat the price leapt *quite* frequently, and at last I got one figure for hitting America, and another for half-way, and another for leaving the planet at all, my dear *too* satisfactory, and that was that.

Well then of course I had to tell my *poor* Haddock my *first* evasion, about a long week-end in my *importunate* constituency or something, my dear it was *rather* poignant, but I sent him the *most* penitent letter from the thingummy-drome, but of course *quite* making the point that it was all for *his* sake and now he 'd be able to give up doing advertisements and write *synthetical* novels or any garbage he liked, my dear Gertrude says he merely *howled* like a dog and *flung* the goldfish-bowl out of the window when he got the letter, *rather* moving darling, wasn't it, however all 's well etc.

Well, my dear, *picture* your little Top at this *draughty* drome at *five* in the morning, *blue* with cold and *lemon* with aprehension, and my dear a criminal eyesore in *chestnut* leather, my dear I looked like a new suit-case *bulging* with a body, however, thanks be, there were no witnesses except the Lotweed who my dear was *too* cylindrical and clinging and nearly drowned me in the generous bosom, however I came up the third time so we climbed into the Spirit of Woman and abruptly left the planet, and of course never go *near* the air, it 's as *cold* as a carcase, and the *noise,*

my dear like *forty* motor-lorries in a telephone-box, and the *vibration,* my dear it 's like sitting on a mechanical *drill,* and of course the *barbarous* thing was that owing to the rush and hushery of it all I 'd *merely* never been up *before,* of course I 'd had a *sly* suspicion that I wasn't exactly *Nature's* bird-girl, my dear *too* right, because we 'd scarcely soared for *ten* minutes darling when I was as sick as an *Aunt,* my dear *too* humbling, because it wasn't a case of Now we *are* sick and done with it, but utter high frequency and *protracted* agony, my dear I was sick *all over* the Western Counties and three parts of Ireland, but of course the *moment* we saw the unnecessary Atlantic I was *so* petrified I forgot about the old tummy, well darling I thought of you and my poor Haddock of course, and had *rather* conscience trouble, and I merely *lay* on the floor with the spanners and the sandwiches and *prayed* and *prayed* for thousands of miles, but of course *quite* fortitudinous on the surface, because whenever Claude wrote me a note, my dear that 's the *fallacious* thing about the air, you merely can't *utter* because of what they call the *hum* of the engines, well he would write down How D' You Feel Little Woman and I would write back Too Buoyant Old Snipe or something sparkling like that, but my dear feeling like a *rubber sponge* inside and the little bosom heaving with *girlish* tears, my dear I 've realised one thing what absolute *girls* girls are, don't you agree darling.

Well my dear after about *three* thousand miles I got used to the horror and was *merely* bored, my *dear* the boredom, because the *whole* Atlantic is nothing but *wet* clouds and you can't see a thing, and of course the *moment* I wasn't frightened I was sick again, and so it went on, however *about* midnight I saw that Claude was *practically* asleep poor sheep, so I thought I 'd do the serviceable hero-girl and keep him conscious with *hilarious* ſtories, my dear I wrote down in capitals all the *moſt* drawing-room ones I know, not naughty of *course* darling but definitely Continental, however he didn't seem to get much of a *kick* out of them, so at laſt I told him about Papa Chase at the dentiſt's, my dear *rather* crude I know but *conſider* the circs, well *at* that he laughed and laughed and laughed till I thought he 'd fall into the sea, my dear *too* right because juſt then whether it was his laughing or what, the Spirit of Woman merely kicked up its heels and *dived* through a cloud, and we fell *flop* on the foul Atlantic, my dear *too* alarming.

Well darling I powdered the little nose and everything, however I muſt ſtop now so ask me no details, *ſuffice* it to say that *years* passed and *there* we were, but my dear the *bizarre* thing is that in *ſpite* of the utter *ſqualor* of it all I was *too* convinced that all would be well ſtill, but on the other hand the masculine male had gone all sepulchral and *no hope* whatever, well of course we rather *neſtled* together because of the brutal cold

and sort of *discussed* our paſts and everything, and *suddenly* my dear, my dear you *won't* believe me, but the man went *suddenly* soupy and said I adore you little woman, my dear don't *ever* tell anyone I told you this, so I said, O *gosh* like father like son, because my dear you *would* think that at four A.M. on a dark night with one small plank between a girl and the Atlantic she *might* be safe from the major passions, but my dear he wanted to utterly *lash* the bodies together and *drown* together in a fond embrace, my dear my *blushes,* but I said *Too* romantic but *how* embarrassing if we *don't* drown and me a bride and everything, well juſt then the dawn began to happen, thanks be, and there was the *moſt* opportune Cunarder about *two* waves away, my dear *too* well-arranged, well it only shows my dear that a girl can *simply* never be *too* careful, my dear not a *whisper* of this because my darling Haddock has been a *unique* saint about it all but if he knew the *whole* ſtory, anyhow I've got the halfway prize and *hydraulic* publicity but no more bird-work for your *terreſtrial* little TOPSY.

LETTER IV

AT THE PRUNERY

Well Trix darling no doubt you 'll *chuckle* somewhat at the address, but *here* I am my dear *definitely* interned at Doctor Bootle's *Prunery* and have been for a week, well you see after the *afflicting* strain of *almost* flying the Atlantic my *girlish* nerves were *utterly* twanging, my dear you 'd only to *contradict* me and they played a *tune,* and of course I must be *quite* pepulent by the time the *Session* sits, and the Press were being *rather* importunate about the *flight* and everything, my dear as Haddock said a public woman these days has no more privacy than a *goldfish,* so what with everything he thought I 'd better go into a *retreat* or cloister somewhere and *quietly* decarbonise the neurotic system, and at the same time *incubate* my Parliamentary programme.

So *here* I am my dear sort of *sitting* on my policy and eating *nothing* but prunes, my dear you *must* have heard of this place it 's *the* Cadogan health-hell at the moment, my dear they charge you *fortunes* and *as* I say give you *nothing* but prunes, because of course *orange-juice* is *quite* vieux jeu by now, and my dear *don't* think we 're stinted, we have the *most* protracted dinners, my dear *prune* soup, and *fillet* of prune, and *prune* cutlets, and after that *Roast* prune,

and then as a rule we have prune à la *crème,* and as often as not some sort of a *prune* savoury, no coffee of *course* but they have the *most* exhilarating prune *liqueur*, oh and I forgot, there's generally some nice *prunes purées* with the joint, also on Wednesday we *each* get a *banana* to ourselves, and on Sunday night which is *rather* an orgy we have beet-root salad *instead* of the savoury.

Well darling as you *know* I'm not a *congenital* herbivore, but I must say the *effect* is *rather* ethereal, and personally I'm doing the thing *too* fanatically, well so far I've *refused* both *beet-root* and *banana* and am utterly *loyal* to the prune, in fact in a day or two your misunderstood little friend will be 100 per cent. *prune,* because my dear it's *too* discouraging to think that all these *æons* have fluttered by in vain before Dr. Bootle discovered it, but it seems the little *prune* is *Nature's* nourishment, my dear *nothing* else was ever *meant* to be eaten, well it's got *more* vitamins than the orange, my dear somebody's *counted* them, and more *hypo-cardrates* or something than the *banana,* and *no* alkali or *starch* or uric acid or *anything,* my dear *did* you know that if the *British* Army had been fed on *nothing* but prunes the *War* would have been over in *1916,* well that's what they say, and my dear it's *rather* a scandal when you come to think of it, of course Dr. Bootle says that *all* other food ought to be utterly *vetoed* by law,

because he says that in the end the *Prune* Peoples must come out on top, so of course he 's got a *big* kick out of an *authentic* legislator like your Topsy coming here, you know my dear they can say what they like about the *decay* of representative what-nots and everything but there 's *no* doubt that being an M.P. *does* give a girl a sort of phantom importance, only I do *rather* find that people expect one to *bleat* about politics from dawn till dream-time, and of course all these infatuated *womanly* women who want me to be the absolute *battle-axe* of the *Woman's* Cause, my dear they *molest* and *mob* me *already,* and even in *this* concealed turning, because there are two *analogous* friends of the *Lotweed* object here and *whenever* they can they merely *herd* me into a corner and *snuffle* at me about some *rancid* aspect of the *Woman's* Problems, my dear I 'm *too* laconic with them and it 's *even* come to my *hiding* in the bathroom, because as I 've *always* said there 's never been more than *one* Woman's Problem and that is *Man,* and in *my* opinion the pathetic shrimp has already gone down for the second time and there 's no hurry about the *third,* anyhow I 'm *too* clear that I am *not* going to be a sort of whining-trumpet for the jaundiced doe, because *love* is the note of *my* life, and as a *matter* of fact I *rather* detest *all* women, don't you agree darling?

Well my dear as you may imagine the *other* inmates are a *shade* apocryphal and miscellaneous,

of course there are some of the *more* cylindrical *Cadogan* matrons busy revising the measurements, and a lot of *anæmic* citizens acquiring *flesh,* because my dear that 's the *radiant* thing about the prune, it doesn't matter if you 're too *fat* or too *thin,* the gifted little prune will do the necessary, my dear it 's *ambidexterous,* and of course anything like *lassitude* or *blood-pressure* or *flatulence* or *tennis-elbow* is *utterly* prunable, which reminds me *who* did I find here but Councillor *Mule,* well I forget if you know about him but he 's the absolute *Voice* of the Crêpe Vote in Burbleton, my dear *too* sunless, the *world's* vinophobe, and he 's suffering from cubic capacity insomnia *and* nerves, which is not *much* of an " ad." for the Chocolate-Suckers, well of course I 'm having to step *rather* delicately because of course we 're *quite* cat and dog, my dear *this* is the fungus who suppressed the Burbleton *band* on Sundays, and we 're going to have the *rudest* battles about that and a few other outrages, my dear I 'm so *tired* of all these *railing* sin-seekers and sucking Savonarolas, however *at* the moment my policy is to *rather* win him with *sweetness* and disarming glances, but my dear *too* impervious at the time of writing, however nous verrons.

Well *meanwhile* darling as for myself I must confess I 'm a mere *bubble* of well-being, thanks to the plucky prune, my dear sort of *rarefied,* well I feel that at *any* moment the little head might *float* off the little body and merely *waft*

about the firmament, if you know what I mean, and of course the girl's complexion is *too* diaphanous and satisfactory, my dear I *rather* think I'm looking *rather* lovable, and it's just as well perhaps there's no male inmate under the buriable age, however fortunately I feel more *valetudinous* than anything, because having at last a little time on the hands I've been *cherishing* the frame in every direction, my dear I read *all* the advertisements in *all* the hen-papers and send for *simply* everything, because my dear it's *quite* alarming when you realise how we all *neglect* the body, my dear I've bought *brassières* and *cuticle* removers, and *things* for the *lips* and the *dandruff* and the *nails* and as for the *skin,* my dear *toning* creams and *tightening* creams, and *skin foods* and *muscle* oil, and then of course there are the *mouth*-balms and the *eye*-preservers, and *things* to put in the bath, and *garden-rollers* for the little tummy, and of course the exercises *quite* always, so altogether I *do* see now that if a girl can keep the body clean and sweet it's *about* all she's time for on *this* planet darling, and I *rather* fear that when I'm a busy public woman again I shall become a *mere* mass of *degenerate tissues,* and *flaccid muscles*, and *fatty accumulation,* not to speak of *impure pores* and *embarrassing odours,* with probably a touch of halitosis and lethargy, my dear these advertisements, *too* upsetting, however I'm *determined* to have a good pure *prune*-foundation for the winter months, so

I 'm going to suffer for another week here, if only to irritate Councillor Mule, though I muſt say I 'm *quite* beginning to pine for my Haddock and as a *matter* of faſt the *tineſt* beaker of juniper-juice and Italian would be *rather* like the ripple of a cooling ſtream in the *fatiguing* deserts of Sahara, and of course *what* Haddock is going to say about the *bill* my dear, because as far as I can see it *works* out at *about* a guinea a *prune,* however no more now darling, your *auſtere* little prunatic Topsy.

LETTER V

MAKES A FILM

Well Trix my hidden wildflower *here* I am at the health-hell still, but my dear *since* I wrote to you things have been *rather* tending towards a certain mobility and *stress*, well I *think* I told you about Councillor *Mule* being here, my dear the *King* of the vinophobes in *my* constituency, President of the Anti-Smile Society and *death* to anything that *might* bring a spark of joy into the *dogmatic* gloom of Burbleton life on the Sabbath-day, well my dear he's taking the prune-treatment to diminish his *specific* gravity, my dear *too* right, because my dear *quite* annually he does the *foulest* yap in public about the young girls' *bathing* uniforms and everything, *little* realising, poor drain, that he's the *most* indecent spectacle in the industrial *North*.

Well of course *blood* my dear is *definitely* going to fly between us before *I* cease to be Member for Burbleton (West), however I thought I'd better give him a chance so I *began* by disarming the stoat with sweetness, my dear *too* abortive, my dear I've *never* exerted the wistful charms before without *some* sort of a reaction, and it was *rather* humbling and salubrious I suppose, however that being a flop I swiftly mobilised the reserves, and of course I *ought* to explain that the effect of *two*

weeks of *nothing* but prunes is *too* different from *one,* well after the *first* week as I told you a girl feels *rarefied* but by about half through the *second* one 's *merely* anæmic and we sort of *hover* about like semiflated *airships,* well what I mean is that one 's *mainly* sluglike but at the *faintest* puff you go *quite* up in the air, *rather* intricate darling I 'm afraid but I can't stop to explain, well *tempers* and everything, you do see *don't* you?

Well my dear the *sole* blood-sport played at the Prunery is the *dyspeptic* game of *croquet,* and while I was still hoping to sirenise the Mule thing we put in a good many totters round the course together, *rather* a martyrdom darling because I had to keep the *tightest* rein on the little self, because my dear croquet as *you* know utterly *draws* out the *vilest* passions of the human system, especially played with the antique rules and of course like many of the virtuous ones the Councillor *cheats* at games, my dear *too* crude, and he used to *too* brutally *bash* me into the *snailiest* bushes, however I used to *frolic* after my ball with a *Christian* smile, but my dear on *Sunday* the agony was *too* much, well there he was my dear sort of *floating* round the lawn like a *captive* jelly, my dear like an *extinct* monster in *aspic,* my dear like a—however, and of course what with ten days of prunes I was feeling *rather* giddy about the knees and a little *inflammable* in the head, *you* know my dear when you feel that the *next* minute you *must* short-circuit, my dear *too* right,

because at *last* I 'd managed to *quite* hit the municipal ball, and my dear *as* I stood there with the little foot poised ready to do that *uncivilised croquet* proceeding a fuse did burst in the little brain darling and I saw *bright* scarlet, well I said, *Well* Councillor we 're having *rather* a hilarious Sunday afternoon aren't we, and I *do* hope you 're *adoring* the game, but *what* about all those *hereditary* blotting-pads who have to fester in Burbleton all day, and *can't* play tennis because of *you* Councillor, and can't go to the pictures because of *you* Councillor, and can't listen to a band because of *you* Councillor, while *here* you are Councillor gadding it at croquet with a *married* girl, well, if you ask *me* Councillor you 're a periphrastic *Pharisee* or something of that sort, and *then* my dear, *rather* hysterical I know, I *raised* the mallet with *both* hands and merely *mutilated* my own pathetic *foot* with it, my dear I 'm *lame* for life, however the blood of the Trouts and everything, so I bit the little lip and took aim again, and *this* time my dear I utterly *lashed* the Mule ball *through* the shrubbery and down the *longest* bank into the *ornamental* water where my dear it *floated,* and next to *puncturing* the man himself with a *pointed* spear *quite* nothing could have been such *anodyne,* my dear there *is* that to be said for croquet isn't there?

Well my darling you *may* blame me but *if* you do it *simply* means that you *don't* understand *psycology,* because my dear the effect of Council-

lors on a *pruny* ſtomach, well anyhow for the reſt of the game I *merely* behaved like a *rogue* elephant my dear *never* trying to penetrate a hoop myself but always *wickedly* torpedoing the Mule out of position, well he was *mute* and suffering and of course he won the game in the end, *too* like a man, and afterwards I *rather* apologised, however the next day I had one of my *inspired* flashes, because my dear Haddock 's *juſt* given me one of those *bijou* cinema-machines and *in* the bath darling the little brain said suddenly why not do a *film* of the Mule horror, because my dear the truth as somebody said *is* indefatigable, and the *more* people realise that the *more* people are like Councillor Mule the more people *look* like Councillor Mule the *less* I mean the *more* people will utterly *ſtrain* the nerves not to *be* like Councillor Mule if you see what I mean darling.

Well my dear I began the *very* next day when the *Mule* thing was taking the afternoon prune with a few of the more *globular* inmates on the verandah, of course they were all *too* hungering to be in it, so the Mule *couldn't* take umbrage, and besides I was being rather bright and boracic again, anyhow after a few mass-effects like that I began doing *solo*-ſtudies of the Councillor, but always utterly by *requeſt* my dear and *too* complimentary, my dear I got him reading *White* Lives which is the absolute *organ* of the Anti-macassar Vote and writing an anti-article to *The Burbleton Poſt* and chewing a lonely prune my

dear in *cyclist's* knickerbockers and a gentleman's boater, my dear I took him *walking,* from above, and *cheating* at croquet, and of course *quite* numberless close-ups, my dear a close-up of the Councillor is just like looking into an Aquarium and *suddenly* seeing something which is not quite *nice,* my dear he *is* the human octopus, my dear his *eyes* are the sort of thing that makes divers *ignore* the specie and *rush* to the surface, however of course I kept telling him that he had *Nature's* film-face and how *throbbed* his friends would be to see the *new* VALENTINO, but after a bit my dear he became *rather* terse and reluctant about sitting, so I said I was *too* contrite and would *never* molest him again, if I might perhaps sneak an *occasional* picture when he wasn't looking.

Well *then* began the absolute *cream* of the campaign, because my dear *wherever* the yam went I followed afar off and movied him from astern, and of course whenever he turned round suddenly and saw me I produced one of my *winning* little smiles and said he was to *quite* ignore me, and of course it *ought* to be rather a compliment if a *magnetic* girl keeps on taking your photograph, so no umbrage was *definitely* taken, however he began to shun me somewhat and took to roaming secret in the woods and spinneys and my dear peeping *too* nervously over the shoulder every ten yards, and my dear I was nearly *always* there, and of course some of the photography in this

film is *quite* German because my dear he's loſt *tons* of flesh here and his *ghaſtly* clothes are perfectly *feſtooned* about the body like an *empty* balloon, and my dear if you can imagine the *zymotic* object disappearing down the leafy viſtas with *guilty* backward looks, as if the *Flying* Squad were after him, *reel* after *reel* darling, my dear I don't know *what* the *Pure* Vote of Burbleton will think!

Well at laſt he began to wear rather a *hunted* look and on Thursday he *madly* packed and shambled away to Burbleton, so *laſt* night I *released* the little film to the assembled inmates and my dear it *bit* them, they *merely* howled, of course I've put in the *moſt* professional captions and things, my dear *Councillor* Mule Seeks Truth In The Foreſt and Councillor Mule *Fretting* about the Sins of Burbleton, my dear *too* crude, however I *rather* think that when the Mule and I meet at our own little Waterloo the Mule Animal Picture is going to be *rather* a weapon, however no more now darling, your little crusader Topsy.

LETTER VI

GOES HUNTING

WELL Trix my crystallised cherry I 'm completing the cure down here at the Dilvers' my dear I 'm having *rather* an orgy of air and exercise, disgusting for the brain darling, I can scarcely *think*, however I do feel less like a dried prune, anyhow we 've had the *longest* paper-chase over absolute *hill* and bog and my dear whether it was the prunes or what to my *frank* surprise I discovered that *running* was *rather* congenial, because I have rather an antelope action and breathe *plausibly* through the nose, and my dear there 's an *angelical* man here called *Colonel* Candy, my dear *too* boyish and beamy for a Colonel and he commands the *Guards* Cavalry or something, well he was a hound too and we *practically* caught the hares together only not quite because at the crisis I bounded gracefully into the *profoundest* brook, anyhow he said I was *Nature's* gazelle in the running department and I *rather* thought he was *rather* attracted so the next day I challenged him to a *handicap* Marathon round the private lake, which my dear is *quite* miles so of course he gave me the *most* benevolent handicap, I was half out of *sight* because of the shrubberies, but you know there 's *no* doubt that girls were *not* designed for mobility in skirts, so my dear after about *half* a

mile what with *agony* in the chest and the little breath *oozing* in *pitiful* sobs I paused at a convenient bush, discarded the lower garment, and darted on in my Parisian bloomers, *chaste* darling but of a *tangerine* hue, however *such* was the relief and I got my second wind, but my dear *what* was my horror when *thus* arrayed I crashed round a corner and met *one* Duchess and a Lady-in-Waiting taking a walk, my dear my *blushes,* and of course *what* they thought because by this time the Colonel had nearly caught me and my dear being *Nature's* knight he'd picked up the skirt and it seems was cantering behind me with the garment on his *arm,* however I waved *cheerily* to the ladies and panted on, my dear *too* insouciant but far from convincing.

However darling as if *that* wasn't enough *yesterday* I took the Colonel to an absolute *fox-meet* in the car, because it seems he's a *casual* hunter but had brought no spurs or anything, so he said we might follow on *foot* perhaps, well darling you know my views but I thought it was rather my duty to litterally *see* what happens, and of course the *magnetic* smile of the man, however Catherine Dilver said I wasn't to go unless I swore to be *too* restrained and not *head* the foxes or shoot them or anything, because she didn't want to lose caste with the Master and everybody, so I utterly swore because when you're a guest one must *rather* behave, whatever one's principles well don't you agree darling?

Well my dear it was the *rudeſt* day and raining *too* cruelly however I muſt say the meet was *quite* pictorial, only of course it was *rather* difficult to see the horses for the cars, and my dear the Colonel says there are *some* Hunts now where they don't allow horses at the meet at *all,* however the red-coats and everything and those *divine* dogs, which my dear I *patted* tenderly to placate the Maſter, but my dear *too* unresponsive I thought, the Maſter I mean, and of course I do *not* think that the British girl looks beſt in a *bowler,* not to mention a *veil,* my dear Margaret Dilver looked *quite* another person and *as* I told her I preferred the original, of course *quite* piquant and so forth but my dear as I said *why* muſt the fox-field be the *sole* place where the *men* dress gaudy and the girls go *plain?*

And my dear the whole thing was *rather* alarming because nearly *every* horse had a *red* ribbon on the tail to show that it kicked and scratched and was generally malignant, though of course if a horse had *blue* ribbons *all over* I wouldn't truſt it *very* fanatically, and my dear as all horses do nothing but go round and round in the *moſt* suggeſtive circles one gets quite giddy with edging away from the scarlet ſterns, however at laſt the dogs departed and we *spludged* after them along an *obscenely* muddy lane and I loſt the Colonel almoſt at once in the crowd, and they all disappeared, so my dear forlorn and lonely I merely *waded* along till I saw a *diſtant*

red coat beside a wood or spinney, which of course taking it to be the Master or something I *plunged* across the filthy fields through *streets* of barbed wire and two *definite* morasses, and when I tell you that it turned out to be a woman in a *red* mackintosh, my dear *too* galling, well after that I sort of *swam* back to the road where far away on the other side I saw *one* man with a *reluctant* horse constantly trying to jump the *same* fence, so then I crawled back to the car and merely flopped on the cushions to wait for the Colonel, my dear *quite* moribund, and now comes the drama, because my dear the whole time one could hear the dogs *vaguely* barking afar off because it seems it was one of these *circular* hunts, anyhow as I lay gasping with the door open what *do* you think the *largest* fox jumped into the car, my dear *quite* out of breath and *smelling* horribly but with the *most* appealing eyes, well my dear the little brain worked swiftly and I thought Catherine or no Catherine I *can't* have all those *dogs* in the car, so my dear I *closed* the door and I said to the faithful Parker *rather* casually Drive on.

Well darling we drove on slowly about *two* miles up the longest hill, me patting the fox and everything which apart from the smell gave *no* trouble at all, and of course it was rather a dilema because after what Catherine said I didn't think it fair to utterly terminate the hunt, so my dear the fox having rather a *moulting* tendency I plucked a fluffy bit from the back now and then and

merely threw it out of the window, with the *result* my dear that *when* we ſtopped at the top of the hill I looked back and saw the whole *herd* of dogs quite pouring up the road and *one* man in red absolute *miles* behind and *rather* wildly playing the *cornet.*

Well *then* my dear foreseeing trouble and ſtress I told Parker to have *no* mercy on the accelerator and we departed at about sixty into the *heart* and bowels of the *next* county but *one,* where my dear at a *convenient* copse I opened the door and gently tried to *disembark* the fox, my dear *too* fruitless because the *wiſtful* creature declined to budge, so I thought perhaps in its *home-county* it would be more amenable, and of course I had to retrieve the Colonel, so my dear we ſlunk back by circumſical routes but my dear *what* was my horror when ſuddenly round a corner we ran into the *entire* hunt drawing a ſpinney or ſomething, however no dogs in ſight, so I threw a rug over Reynard and drove paſt warily, well I picked up the Colonel who my dear had had *quite* enough of hunting on foot, and we 'd juſt ſtarted again when out of the ſpinney came the principal dog, and my dear it gave the *loudeſt* ſniff and bounded after us with alarming noiſes *followed* rapidly by *all* its colleagues, because it ſeems a bit of the fox-fluff had ſtuck to the *back* of the car, ſo I ſaid Faſter Parker, well my dear what *was* I to do because at *that* point *could* I eject the creature, well of course the Colonel was *too* myſtified ſo I

said quietly I can't explain but as a *matter* of fact there 's a *fox* in the car and at that moment he put his foot on the fox and it nipped him *rather* familiarly in the calf, but my dear he *is* a *complete* lamb because he laughed and laughed only he said the whole proceeding was *utter* blasphemy and I ought to stop the car and explain to the Master, so I said that would be *too* fatal because of Catherine Dilver and everything, because probably I shouldn't tune in with the Master and anyhow it was MY car and for that matter it was MY fox, but if we could shake off the dogs then nobody would *ever* know, so my dear we drove like tigers along the *tiniest* lanes and at last escaped, only so hot was the hunt that we couldn't stop to evacuate the fox till a *secret* shrubbery on the Dilvers' own drive, and *now* my dear I hear that seven of the *prize* pullets disappeared last *night,* my dear *too* wearing, because I *did* mean to behave so *utterly* well, Oh dear, farewell your *misfortunate* TOPSY.

LETTER VII

PASSES POXTON

TRIX my poppy I find the *jading* thing about being a *public* woman is that one feels responsible for *quite* everything, and of course *all* a girl's constituents write *sulphuric* letters to her *too* daily, my dear I 've come to the conclusion that *my* constituency is THE cradle of the nation's half-wits, my dear there seems to be a *definite* race of *moonmen* who dwell at Burbleton and write *imperative* postcards, *women* principally of *course,* my dear you 've no idea what absolute *cabbage-water* the minds are made of, and the *baffling* feature is that *at* the Election they seemed *too* normal, however the moment people begin to write letters they do rather tend to give themselves away *doesn't* one darling?

Well my dear *at* the moment I 'm *moved* to the core about the cancerisation of England, my dear *have* you read that *luminous* book England and the Octopus or something, you *must* buy it I haven't myself because Hermione Tarver is going to lend me her library copy, however I 've read bits and it 's *quite* inflammatory, it 's by WILLIAMS ELLIS that *rather* Celtic architect we met in a bathing-dress somewhere, well anyhow he 's *too* right because my dear *last* Saturday I and my Haddock motored all the septic way from

Dover to Worthing, of course you 'll say But *why* motor from Dover to *Worthing* and my dear you *may* say it, because my dear *Worthing,* and my dear *Brighton,* and *Hastings,* and *Bexhill,* and *Seaford,* and *Newhaven,* and *Rottingdean,* and *Shoreham,* my dear *uncataloguable,* however the facts are as stated so *don't* ask for the grisly details, well my dear an *old* friend of Haddock's called *Rowland* drove us, I *think* I 've mentioned him before, well he 'd have been *quite* an endurable fellow darling if only the *internal* combustion engine had *never* been invented, but since it has been he 's a human *epidemic,* my dear he 's the *kind* of distemper who actually *likes motoring,* my dear he *lives* for his next car, my dear call me crude if you *like* but his breath *does* smell of *petrol,* my dear he *is* definitely a *carburetter,* and of course my dear you know *my* attitude to motoring, it 's merely an *epileptic* way of getting from one place to another, but as for pleasure, my dear you can't *read,* you can't *think,* you can't *smoke,* you *must* talk if there 's anyone there, you *must* look at the scenery *however* nocuous, and my dear at *every* corner you *merely* oscillate from prayer to thanksgiving, and of course my dear in an *open* car where the *whole* time you have *one* eye screwed up and the other full of winged creatures, my dear after *five* miles I want to resign my seat and this was a *hundred,* however off we went, and my dear it was the *pearliest* morning with Nature *quite* at the top of her form,

which is more than I can say for the efforts of *Man,* well when I tell you that in the *whole* hundred miles you hardly go *one* without seeing something that merely *blisters* the eyes with cheapness and hideosity, my dear you know that *optimistic* yap about Kent being the *Garden* of England and everything, well along the South Coast it's much more like the *Backyard* of England, or the *Garage* of England, or the *Servants' Bathroom* of England because my dear you know the Romney Marshes which of course are *too* atmospheric and flat but at present the *only* atmosphere is supplied by *motor*-spirit, and the *entire* coast is a *chain* of motor-parks for bathers and *motor*-shops and *motor*-advertisements, and loathly *tea-shops* for the motorist, and gruesome *warnings* to the motorist, and my dear *when* I realised that I was being a motorist myself I merely *blushed* for shame all down the little back, do you ever do that darling?

However compared with Fair Sussex by the Sea the Backyard of England is *almost* amenitous, my dear I'll pass over *Brighton* and *even Hastings,* because of course I suppose all these *teeming* Britons with families *must* have their annual wash and brush-up by the sea, and my dear *that*'s the sardonic thought *isn't* it that it's the pure old sea is responsible for all these putrefying places, however one's got used to the larger blots, and *parts* of some of them are less agonising than others, but my dear it reminds me of poor

brother Phil who, my dear it 's *rather* a crude allegory but he used to have the hugeſt *boils* after the War from *iron* rations or something poor lamb, scattered *all* about the body, my dear he was *too* patient with them and we used to have *names* for them all, my dear one would be Brighton and another *Bexhill* and one absolute *carbuncle* was Haſtings, well that was bad enough but it was *rather* much when he began coming out in *small* spots everywhere *in between* the major boroughs, well we had him inoculated and *swamped* him in orange-juice which *quite* cured him only of course then he had *jaundice* and was *too* bilious for *years,* sorry darling this is rather a *realiſtic* letter perhaps, but you *do* see my point, it 's the *creeping* spottery is the *ghaſtly* symptom, my dear at *Shoreham* there 's the *moſt* awful *neſt* of bungaloid ulcers, and of course *when* you come to *Poxton* you *merely* yearn for the *invasion* of England by hiſtory's moſt deſtructive *Huns,* though of course I 'm *too* sorry for all the poor dupes who 've been *lured* into living there by some *wart* of a financier who *doubtless* lives elsewhere.

Well my dear *meanwhile* the Rowland was being *rather* a burden because the *whole* time he talked of nothing but the *internal* organs of his unalluring car and wondering *what* was rattling and *why,* when of course the *entire* machine was one *tautologous* rattle because he will keep seeing if he can get sixty out of her on a

bad road, and my dear what with *wasps* in the little eye and *inhaling* the exhaust of those *maternal* motor-coaches I was *quite* saturated *too* soon, and of course I kept on *yelping* with anguish at the sights I saw, but my dear this *mechanical* fellow saw *simply* nothing but his *felonious* speedometer, my dear *too* unmoved, my dear as long as it's a *road* it can run between *dustheaps* for all he'd care, and *when* we got to *Poxton,* my dear, *as* I say, *Poxton,* my dear the little hand trembles as I write the word, my dear it is the *world's* sight-restorer because you may have had *no* views before but *when* you see *Poxton* you have the *most* æsthetic *abdominal* pain, like someone getting religion, especially if you knew those *rather* seductive cliffs a few years ago *before* they broke out with these *gangrenous growths,* my dear it *is* definitely the *bungalonic plague,* well not even *bungalows* often, it's a mere multitude of *bijou* shacks and garagettes *dropped* on the innocent downs out of a *sack,* and my dear I hardly saw *one* of these pustulous little dwellings that didn't advertise *something,* one wants to fly up and down in an aeroplane and *spray* the place with a good strong weed-killer, one *aches* for an *earthquake,* however I hear the *tragic* inhabitants are beginning to take some *steps* at last, only of course probably the *best* thing would be to utterly *preserve Poxton* just as it is, my dear a sort of *grisly* Peace Memorial, and have absolute *free* expeditions from all over

England to *show* people what 's going to happen everywhere if *somebody* doesn't function *quite* soon, because at the moment as Haddock said the disease is *galloping* destruction, but of course all *Rowland* said was we 'd better *stop* here for *petrol* O gosh!

Well my dear *when* you think of the *things* you 're not allowed to do which do *no* harm to anybody, and Auntie Jix tearing her suffering hair over twenty Britons in a night-club, while my dear a *herd* of mouldy little builders can take *chunks* of the Sussex Downs and turn them into a festering eye-sore for *quite* ever, and nobody can stop them, well of course they *can* really, only what *is* the good of these balloon-bellied councillors, have they *never* heard of an *architect,* of course they 're too busy peering at a girl's *skirts* and *censoring* the bathing-dress, my dear as Haddock said they can't see the wood for the *knees,* and if only they 'd realise that a bad girl dies but a bad building lasts for *centuries,* and of course all this *bat-eyed* bleating about the *declining* Birth-rate, my dear the Birth-rate ought to be *stopped,* well anyhow the moment the House sits I shall go to the PRIME and say *Darling* STANLEY *put* the old pipe down and have a Mussolini morning about this, farewell now darling your *shocked* little TOPSY.

LETTER VIII

IS ALL FOR AL

TRIX my angel *all* my thanks for your *cherubic* letter but I can't answer *any* of your questions now because I'm *too* worked up about my darling AL, and of course the *fiendish* thing is that I suppose you've *no* idea who my darling AL *is,* my dear I do wish you'd take a *sporadic* glance at the morning papers, because my dear I *quite* admit that most of the Press is *rather* sea-weed, on the other hand there are one or two things happening on this over-rated planet which are almost worthy of a clean girl's attention, well anyhow AL SMITH darling wants to be absolute *President* of the United States, and so does a perfect *paper-weight* of a man called *HERBERT* HOOVER, my dear you can say what you like about the decline of England but I do *not* think that in this decrepit country a man would dare to put up for the President of the *Fire Brigade* if he had a name like HOOVER, with HERB in the prow, my dear *too* facetious, don't you agree, darling?

Only my dear *don't* think I don't utterly *adore* Americans because I merely *do,* and of course Haddock knows some perfectly *blossomy* ones, but that's the staggering thing about them, my dear you *meet* them in London and they seem *quite* lambs and then they go home to America

and gun at each other, well anyhow this AL SMITH 's a Democrat, my dear it 's *rather* sweet he used to be a *paper-boy*, and HERB HOOVER 's a *Republican,* or else it 's the other way round, because my dear I *never* can remember and *nobody* knows the difference, my dear it 's like saying that one man 's a *herring* and the other 's a *bloater,* only there 's *rather* more in it *this* time, because my dear *HERB'S* a Protestant and a *Prohibitionist,* which Haddock says is a contradiction in terms or something, because he says the *whole* idea of Protestantism was against unnecessary *bossing* and *erroneous* doctrines, however AL 's a Catholic and a *moderate* Wet, and my dear *that* will show you the utterly *degrading* effect of having these *feeble-minded* laws, because my dear you probably don't know that the population of the States is a *mere* hundred million, and my dear *when* you think of *all* those people *electing* a President, which with the *exception* perhaps of a *Boxing* champion is *about* the most important thing a man can *be,* and instead of the candidates being called ALBERT the *Just* or HERBERT the *Peacemaker* or anything they 're labelled Moderate *Wet* and Bone *Dry,* my dear like peas or something in a grocer's shop, well as Haddock said it 's utterly *debasing* the currency of *politics* or something, because my dear it seems they 're both the *world's* flawless fellows and have done *quite* miracles but the *sole* thing that seems to matter is this *nursery* question of *diet.*

Because my dear it isn't as if AL wanted to

flood the Continent with *gin,* my dear *all* he says is that he wouldn't be a bit surprised if there were *one* or two Americans who might be *safely* trusted to have a little *white* wine and *lager* beer with their food, if it was *sold* by the State in *sanitary* bottles *one* bottle at a time, in which case of course there 'd be far less whisky imported than there is now, anyhow my dear this is *definitely* the *Lager Beer* Election because *nobody* cares what the *pathetic* men think about Peace or War or anything, the *one* thing is *Is* Lager Beer safe for the *democracy,* and my dear *don't* accuse me of *superfluous* interference with the affairs of a friendly nation, because my dear this is a matter of *common humanity,* my dear like *slavery* or the mutilation of *bishops,* it 's a crime against *nature,* my dear a man in Michigan has just got imprisonment for life for *merely* possessing a *pint* of gin, and of course the *moment* the Eighteenth Amendment oozed into existence the *whole* civilised world ought to have utterly *broken* off relations, my dear like *Russia,* sort of outlawing the Government but *too* sympathetic with the martyred populace, instead of all this *poltroonery* about *moral experiments,* my dear what *is* there *moral* in *not* having what you can't *get,* my dear what 's *moral* is when you utterly *wallow* in temptation and emerge *too* spotless, and *that* my dear as Haddock said is what *moulds* the character, because of course it 's *quite* theoretical that *wine* like women was *merely* created to sort of *test* the

human engine, and if you take away *all* the temptations you *simply* don't know *where* you are, and of course where *is* it to *ſtop,* because my dear *ſpeaking* of women, well there's *no* doubt that *Love* leads to *more* unpleasantness than anything else my dear it's responsible for *all* the divorces and *nearly* all the murders, *three-quarters* of the ſtealing and *all* the over-population, and *that* of course means unemployment and *slums* and misery and Bolshevism, so that you *might* say that Love was the absolute *root* of all evil and of course it *nearly* always begins with *kiſſing,* so my dear I shouldn't be a *bit* surprised if the Twenty-firſt Amendment was againſt *kiſſing,* and then of course there'll be a Kissing Election, and one of the candidates will be a *Petting* Democrat and the other will be a *Platonic* Republican, *unleſs* of course my darling AL gets in this time because I do think *he* might be able to ſtrike a *note* of sanity perhaps, my dear *don't* be *aloof* about this because it's *too* cardinal for *us* because the foul breath of the joyphobes is *already* wafting over the ocean towards us, you can smell it EVERYWHERE, my dear *do* you know that there are *261* societies in England and Wales *all* beavering away for Prohibition and kindred horrors *juſt* like America, of course I know you think I've got a bee in the little bonnet about this, but as Haddock said I'd rather have a bee in the bonnet than absolute *fungus* on the brain well don't you agree darling?

However my dear I 'm *rather* aprehensive for Al because of the Pope, you see there 's *quite* nothing people *won't* say in politics, and it seems they 're *all* saying that Al is going to *put* the Pope in charge of the American Navy, my dear *too* unsuitable, but it *simply* isn't *true,* because I 'm perfectly convinced that Al would *never* do it, anyhow there 's this *irrelevant* religious chat, and they have absolute *pamphlets* to say that my *poor* Al stands for the Vatican and the vine, my dear *Pope* in one pocket and *port* in the other, isn't it *too* cruel, you know my dear I *do* adore religion but I do think that religious people are *too* un-Christian sometimes, and my dear I do believe if you had absolute *statistics* of all the *unnecessary* unpleasantness there 's *ever* been you 'd find that these sort of woolly-headed well-meaners had been responsible for *more* unnecessary unpleasantness than anything else, except Love perhaps, because my dear they can't even have *private* conferences without calling each other the *most* venomous names, my dear *Erastians* and *Apollinarians* and *Monophysists* or something, *too* alarming, *and* my dear *not* content with making the *mouldiest* muddle of their own affairs they *must* keep *crashing* into politics and everything with gratuitous suggestions, and as for these *Jeremiacal* preachers, you *can't* keep them out of the papers these days, my dear the *moment* they see somebody dormatose during a sermon they think civilisation 's cracking and nobody 's pure, and the

nation 's pagan and literature 's foul, and Bolshevism 's looming and the Modern Girl 's a degenerate wasp, however if you ask *my* opinion *nearly* everybody 's much more Christian than they used to be, except some of the wowsers perhaps, and *nearly* everything 's much better than it used to be, except sermons perhaps, and anyhow what HAS the POPE got to do with my *poor* AL being President of America, my dear I 'm going out now to send him a *tender* telegram because I *know* he 's done for, so farewell now darling your noble-hearted TOPSY.

LETTER IX

TAKES HER SEAT

TRIX my darling wasn't it *too* tragic about AL, however I was right of *course* so let that be a warning to you, well you *mere* elector *here* I am at last *litterally* writing to you in the *House* of Commons, and my dear it 's *rather* intimidous the *whole* place smells of Gothic and soap, I don't know if you 've ever been in the building but one seems to be utterly *inhaling* disinfectant, however here I am in the *Does'* Dungeon where the hen-members have truck with their secretaries, I 've just sent Taffeta Mole home to her Vestal pillow, my dear she 's *fabulous,* of course she *venerates* the place, she *stalks* about it as if she was the Prime, she knows *quite* everything and has already draughted *seven* Questions for me to ask, only of course as she *will* try and translate the *Taffeta* thought into the *Topsy* prose, dear cow, I don't know *what* the Speaker will say, especially as I believe he *abhors* adjectives, which is going to be *rather* a handicap isn't it darling?

Well my dear *what* d' you think, *NANCY* ASTOR is sitting at the *next* table dictating the *loudest* letter about farinaceous food, however I must say in spite of her *gruesome* views about the vine and everything she 's *rather* a winner, I *quite* expected

a slightly *sulphuric* reaction because of my vinophilous policy but she didn't seem to resent it a fraction and has been *too* matey, my dear I 'm sitting next to her in the Chamber and she makes the *most* hilarious *rude* remarks about some of the *yams* and *loofahs* of the Party, my dear those are my names for *two* species of the redundant male, well for instance a *yam* would be a *spherical* heavy-weight like Councillor Mule and a *loofah* is one of those *stringy* wearinesses with a face like a long sponge, in fact a *loofah,* and my dear the *rather* macaber thing is that we came to the conclusion that seventy per cent of our *own* Party were *either* loofahs or *yams.*

However, my dear, I was *introduced* by two *utter* old doves, *both* knights darling *and* Privy Councillors Sir Leslie Scott and Sir William Bull, my dear *Nature's* godfathers, *too* courtly and staunch, because Haddock said I 'd better *enter* the House by the Cadogan door if I *am* evacuated from a back-window in the end, well my dear I *do* believe I looked *rather* radiant, anyhow I did what Paris could do for me, because my dear I 'd *quite* determined I would *not* dress up as the *first* feminine undertaker like most of the hen-members, my dear Nancy was rather *astringent* with me about the little outfit because of course she 's *too* correct and wears a sort of *black* biretta, becoming but on the *mediæval* side, and as I said to her sweetly it 's all very well at *your* age, but why not do the thing thoroughly

and *feſtoon* the frame with *jet,* because my dear I said *either* a girl is a ray of sunshine or she is *not,* and if she is it 's *too* unwomanly to come into a perfectly *miasmal* place like this disguised as a *dead tree,* because my dear with *seven hundred* male things all in the same *fuliginous* uniform well *what* an opportunity for a *small* splash of virginal *colour,* and I do *not* see why the *Mother* of Parliaments should dress like a *widow,* and if *that's* the mentality, O gosh Haddock says that 's an erroneous word, well no wonder the debates are more like dirges, don't you agree darling?

Anyhow my dear it 's the *moſt* mellifluous garment in *the* printed velvet which is utterly the worn thing these days only of course printed on the *wrong* side darling because that gives the *nebulous* effect, my dear *extremely* lush and *caramel*-beige, because say what you like my dear you can *not* beat *beige,* and it has the *moſt* wiſtful little *flower* design in cinnamon and burgundy and *firmament*-blue, *rather* less of the little knee showing than latterly darling because of the surroundings and a *boyish* fit to show the girl means business, but I had an Amami morning and the hair was *dazzling,* my dear Haddock said I looked like a cameo corn-field from the Gallery, well anyhow *thus* arrayed I *twinkled* up the floor between my two darling old sheep-dogs, all bows and benevolence, my dear it felt *rather* like a wedding without any women, and my dear the SPEAKER

was *too* pastoral and the Prime utterly *beamed* at me, and they *all* made the *most* odd noises in the throat, my dear *yer-yer-yer*-YER it sounded like, but I've *since* discovered it means Hear hear and this noise is *one* of the things that women can't do, however the *intention* it seems was absolutely congenial, and afterwards I met WINSTON and Sir ROBERT HORNE, both *rather* attracted I think darling and both *quite* charmers themselves in my opinion, well they were all *too* chivalrous, my dear I *even* caught the eye of Auntie JIX and I rather thought the eye became *human* only I've *since* heard she had three *stainless* constituents from *Twickenham* in the Gallery, so I must have erred, and of course I've *totally* surrendered to one of the younger ones I met in the Lobby a friend of Haddock's called *Captain* EDEN, my dear the *nation's* loveliest legislator, my dear six foot of *slender* elegance, *too* Etonian and the *most* Berkeley moustache, my dear I *ached* to sit on his *knee* only it seems he's a Parliamentary Private Sec. or something and parks just behind the Prime and the Foreign Footler so *that*'s an idle dream, and of course I could see at once that the little charms were *rather* fruitless because he's utterly *embalmed* in his job and is one of those rather *alibiquitous* men, my dear *too* elsewhere when you talk to him and you *know* he's thinking of the *Polish* Corridor or some *septic* crisis among the Bulgs, so the only hope I can see is that WINSTON or the Prime may make me *their* P.P.S.,

because if we're legislating hand-in-hand as it were one *might* make more of an impression perhaps, only of course if I have the *smallest* discord with the Whips or anything I shall go *straight* off and sit on those cross-benches and be cross.

And of course I *quite* adore *Winston* who gave me an *imperial* twinkle and said something witful about the House having had just enough Haddock to sharpen its appetite for *Trout,* well I met some of the Labour men who were *quite* disarming, my dear like *tame* bears, and I dined with Haddock in the *Harcourt* Room, which is *rather* stimulating because my dear there's a sort of *tape-measure* in the wall to show who's yapping in the *Chamber* and it's *too* tickling to know that some *absolute* loofah is speaking and merely go on un-Christianly *absorbing* oysters, my dear when Auntie Jix's name went up I ordered the *hugest* rump-steak at *once* as a *gesture,* well then the *Division* bell tinkles and of course one pretends to your guests that it's a *pulverising* bore having to go and vote but of course in the secret bosom feeling *too* legislative and important, though I don't know how long that lasts, of course the food's *rather* poisonous but altogether it's like the *largest* country-house party, *you* know my dear where you don't know the names of *half* the people and *never* need speak to your host, well I feel quite the little House of Commons girl *already,* and watch the papers darling because it's

quite feasible I may make my virgin speech on the Address or something, in *which* case I *rather* fear I shall have to be *rather* rude about the *Royal* oration so pray for me darling your little Stateswoman Topsy.

LETTER X

HAULS DOWN THE GOLD STANDARD

TRIX darling I don't know if you saw but I 'm afraid my virgin speech was a *classic* fiasco, my dear *too* chastening, however here and there the proceedings had fun-value so I 'll nought conceal because my dear the Press were *too* Christian and I don't suppose you *take in* Hansard exactly, by the way darling I *do* hope you 're utterly *preserving* my letters because it 's *occured* to me they might be *rather* cream to the autobiogmongers some day, and I don't know if you 've noticed but I 've been *rather* pedantic about spelling and everything lately for that reason, well I *nearly* always get *aprehensive* right and *even* esotteric don't I darling?

Well of course it 's a fraction *intricate* this macaber tale if you *don't* understand the geography, anyhow it was *quite* arranged that I was to *catch* the SPEAKER's *fictitious* eye after the Honourable loofah for Ullage Boroughs and I must mention of course that the House was *crammed,* my dear *too* insanitary, of course if you *will* have a House of *seven* hundred and a Chamber that holds *four, how* like men darling, and as I will *not* have truck with that *degrading* scramble for seats before *breakfast,* my dear

imagine me ſtanding in a queue with the man HICKS at six o'clock in the morning, and of course some *maggotty* conſtituent came to see me about *Sunday* osculation or something, so what with everything I loſt the little seat, however I thought in *case* I said anything about *vinophobia* it might be juſt as well not to be next to NANCY in case she pinched the little legs or anything, and I was *quite* determined to be rather *carbolic* to the Government about the Gold Standard and everything, so I took a seat on the *cross*-benches *quite* under the Gallery, my dear *whispering* secretly in the palping little bosom, *Miſter* Speaker Sir the *Gold* Standard is the banner of the nation's wretchedness and the gilded ensign of our *defeated* induſtries.

Because my dear that's how Haddock *told* me to begin, of course usually I don't concoct a *syllable* beforehand but merely bubble on *fortuitously,* only one's virgin in the House is *such* an event that we thought I'd better *mesmerise,* and I'd mesmerised the *entire* speech, my dear *calamitous,* however well you see the *Gold Standard* was the absolute *note* of the speech, of course I don't *really* underſtand the Gold Standard, but as I said who *does,* anyhow all this *deflation* is *utterly* spurious, my dear it's *rather* difficult to explain to you because I suppose it's *juſt* possible you haven't *ſtudied* deflation much, well I *think* deflation is a sort of financial *banting* and *inflation* so the inflaters say means feeding

the nation *up,* but of course the other people, that's the *deflaters,* say it means national flatulence, so it's all *rather* intestinal and complex, and my dear you've *no* idea of the *things* a public woman has to keep in the little cranium, however darling *don't* read that bit again because I don't *quite* know what I am but the *point* is *too* simple, you see all this *deflation* they say and the Gold Standard and everything means we have the *most* convincing *credit,* and as I said what is the good of braying about your *credit* if you have *millions* of unemployed, and what *is* the good of the Gold Standard if you *never* see a sovereign, and *what* is the good of having *cheap* food if people have *no* money to purchase same, my dear as *I* said *if* you have the *most* convincing credit what does a girl *do,* one *rushes* out and gets all sorts of *utter* necessaries you *can't* afford *now,* which my dear is *just* what the *Government* ought to do, because my dear *look* at all the *remunerative* things they won't do because they're *short* of money, my dear *roads* and *canals* and Channel *Tunnels* and growing artificial *forests,* and harnessing the *tides* and *all* sorts of *water*-stunts, because my dear there's *no* doubt that *coal* is *too* obsolete, and gosh you'd think there was enough *water* in this country to run the *universe* by electricity, and of course *as* for the money they've only got to have the *world's* seductive loan *specially* for unemployment, my dear call it the *Peace Loan,* get a good publicity man and the trick is *done.*

Well my dear that was the sort of *Message* of my speech, only of course my poor Haddock *would* mutilate it into these *dyspeptic* sentences about *banners* and things, well when the loofah for Ullage Boroughs had ceased uttering, which my dear was the *sort* of relief you get when an *engine* ſtops blowing off ſteam at St. Pancras, well I bounded *nimbly* to the little feet and smiled my winningeſt at the Speaker, but my dear *what* was my humiliation when he called upon a Conſervative yam from Yorkshire inſtead, well my dear I *wilted* like a frozen daffodil into my seat and a rather kindly balloon came up and told me I *couldn't* speak from there because I was *behind* the Bar or under the Bar or something puerile, my dear you 've *no* idea, the place is like a *girls'* academy only *nobody* knows the rules, because *another* Samaritan came up and said I was *utterly* orthodox only the Speaker couldn't have *noticed* the ſlender frame, my dear *too* flattering, anyhow I wasn't going to be muted by *that* ſchoolgirl ſtuff, ſo after a bit I *glided* up the little ſtaircaſe at the back into a ſort of overflow gallery at the ſide, and my dear I 'd *hardly* had time to attend to the haggard features when the yam ſubſided and I *leapt* to the perpendicular again, well my dear ſome beetle ſaid Order order because it ſeems *nobody* 's ſpoken from the Gallery except a man called Healy *centuries* ago, however *nearly* everyone elſe made Yer-yer noiſes and the Speaker called on me and I moiſtened the

little lips and said *Mr.* Speaker Sir the *Gold* Standard.

Well my dear I *ſtop* there because that's juſt where I *did* ſtop, my dear I couldn't *utter,* I merely *looked* down at a sort of *sea* of jelly-fish *glaring* up at me, and they say I was *rather* a Ruth-like and poignant little figure sort of *quivering* alone above the alien gaſteropods, of course they were *foully* polite, my dear if they'd *only* been *rude* I'd have been a different woman, but I *could* not remember a *single* word about the Gold Standard, I don't know *what* I said in the end, my dear *too* brief, some sort of *Chriſtian* babble about the Prime I believe however darling let us draw a veil.

Well my dear I *faded* out of the place and had a juniper-juice for the ſtamina, and I went back when the Prime got up, who my dear *quite* brought tears to the little eyes, my dear *too* magnetic, however now for the fun-ſtuff, well juſt before the Prime ſtopped a perfectly *tropical* loofah who sits for Scotland or somewhere and had the *moſt* offensive snivelly cold *got* up, my dear, and said Mr. Speaker *is* it in order for the Honourable Member for Burbleton to *powder* her nose during the Prime's remarks, my dear *sensation,* I blushed *all* over, well the Speaker said something pedantic about *non sine pulvere* being no doubt applicable to feminine conqueſts but he thought the *sense* of the House was that Honourable Members should in the Chamber confine the

arts of adornment and decoration to their *prose* or something, well they all yer-yerred and cachinnated, and my dear I was *so* ſtaggered I could think of *nothing* to say, because my dear *after* all *what* century *are* they living in, however well the Prime ſtopped and *while* the Speaker was doing the clear-the-lobbies ritual the noxious loofah aforesaid gave the *moſt* hippopotamy *snort,* so my dear I had one of my inspired flashes, I *got* up and I said On an absolute *point* of order Mr. Speaker, but of course *juſt* then it seems the firſt Division bell rang, and the two yams beside me utterly *pulled* me down and said I could only put a point of order *sitting* with a *hat* on, because my dear there 's some *nursery* rule about that, however I said Can't you see the girl 's *hatless,* and then somebody gave me Sir William Bull's *topper* and I utterly yelled *Is* it in order for the Honourable and Bronchial Member to attend to *his* nose in a *hydraulic* manner, only of course I doubt if anyone heard because I was *drowned* in the hat, my dear *right* down to the little shoulders, my dear they *roared,* because of course they 're *Nature's* infants and I muſt say *rather* congenial, well Haddock says that after the hat-exploit they 'll *quite* forget about my virgin fiasco, and I *quite* think that some of them are *quite* attracted so all 's well etc., farewell now your *rather* pathetic Topsy.

LETTER XI

HAS WORDS WITH THE WHIPS

TRIX darling as I *rather* expected I 'm having *rather* trouble with the Whips already because my dear the *perverted* thing is that the *one* thing they don't like a legislatrix to do is to *legislate,* my dear a *private* Member's Bill utterly *sends* up the little temperatures because *all* they want you to do is to *always* be on tap and occasionally *filter* through the Lobbies like a *performing* microbe, well my dear I 've *quite* determined that I 'm *not* going to be a mere automatic divider, especially as they *will* talk about nothing but *politics* in Parliament, my dear all this *phlegmatic* chat about the *rates* and everything, you know there 's *no* doubt that politics are getting *more* and more *materialistic* and gross, because the *sole* thing they *ever* discuss is *bread* and *butter* and *wages* and *trade,* and of course it 's all *too* cardinal, but my dear *after* all man does *not* live by bread alone, except in politics, because my dear they 've *no* time for anything which is not *utterly £ s. d.,* however personally I 'm going to strike an absolute *note* of idealism, and I 've draughted *rows* of *immaculate* Bills already, my dear I 've a Bill to Preserve the *Beauties* of England, and a *Bill* to Start a National *Theatre,* and a *Rent Restriction* Bill for Theatres, and a Bill about Architects, and a

Bill to have a Boat-service on the Thames, and a Bill to Reform the Divorce Laws and another for the *Betting* Laws, and of *course* the Licensing Laws, and a Channel Tunnel Bill, and a Bill to Harness the *Tides,* and a Bill about *Foreſts,* and of course my Peace Loan (Unemployment) Bill, and a Bill to *Nationalise* the Bar, and another for the Hospitals, and a Bill about Sunday and a Bill to *Reduce* the Age of Magiſtrates and Councillors, and a Bill to Improve the Pub, and a Bill to Reform the Second Chamber by the Creation of *Young* Peers, my dear people like Haddock, and a Bill to Aſſiſt Music and one or two more.

Well my dear *some* of these have already been *quite* printed and read a Firſt Time, which is *rather* a throb, only of course the Prime has pinched *all* the private Members' time so *quite* nothing can be done worth doing, but my dear these *pussilanimous* Whips utterly *swooned* when they saw my little Bills because they 'll be *too* popular and *embarass* the Gov., my dear you 've *no* idea what absolute *lizard-livers* they 've got, and my dear the *toil* I 've had to get people to *back* them, because they all say they 're *too* right but will *alienate* the local yams, my dear as *if* that mattered, however the Whips said they were all *too* heinous and if I wasn't careful I should *loſe* the Whip so I said who *wants* your dismal Whip and that 's how it ſtands, O snakes a Division, no more now darling but I 'll send you my Sunday

Bill and I think you 'll agree that the *preamble* anyhow is *rather* plausible farewell your *refractory* Topsy.

(*Enclosure.*)

A Bill to Improve the Condition of the People on Sunday and for the Increase of Joy on Week-days.

Whereas notwithstanding the passage of time there is a *noxious* species of municipal yam which lives in the year 400 A.D. and feeds on antique regulations and *barbarical* taboos, and whereas together with another *mediæval* kind of weasel called the Licensing Justices the yams aforesaid have made the Lord's Day a day of wretchedness and undiluted *gloom* in the larger towns of these teeming islands, especially the North, well *have* you been to Burbleton on Sunday, and whereas the said yams and dog-fish having comfortable homes have no itch to go to the *pictures* on Sunday or listen to a *band* in the parks and don't see why anybody else should, and anyhow they can play *golf* if they like, and whereas being too antique and shaggy to have a best girl it doesn't occur to them that other people *may* have, but whereas the poor having *small* homes cluttered up with mothers-in-law and dirty plates after lunch do proceed into the streets for recreation but there is no recreation, well in a place like Burbleton there are *no* cinemas open, and *no* concerts, and Councillor Mule has stopped the

band in the Park, there is not one *note* of music all day except hymns though of course it's *too* lawful to read these *corrupting* Sunday papers, but whereas nobody can go to church *all* day, and whereas by reason of the mothers-in-law and best girls aforesaid the poor dupes must go *somewhere,* but there is nowhere to go except the museum and the pubs, and whereas it is unlawful to hold hands in the museum, and therefore they walk *drearily* about the streets and there is a great deal of promiscuous clicking in the High Street, and of course if it rains they probably go into the pub, in *which* case the aforesaid yams are responsible, and whereas for these reasons the said yams and Councillors have shown themselves unfit to govern the recreations of the people on Sunday or any other day, and anyhow they were only elected to manage the drains, and whereas there is nothing in the Holy Scriptures to say that Sunday should be one long funeral, and whereas the aforesaid Licensing Stoats have certain powers concerning the issue of licences for music dancing and other guileless amusements which powers for similar causes as aforesaid they have abused *most* foxily,

Be it therefore enacted by the King's *most* Excellent Majesty, by and utterly *with* the advice and consent and everything of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and of *course* the old Commons, in this *present* Parliament assembled and massed, and by the authority of the same as follows:

Definitions.

1. In the construction of this Act the following words and expressions have the following meanings, unless excluded by the context, and anyhow it's *too* obvious what they mean, that is to say:

The expression "*yam*" means a spherical growth like Councillor Mule of the Burbleton Town Council who has somehow *clambered* on to the Council by *weaselish* work in the *provision* world and knows about the trams and things, for *which* reason he *sees* himself as a censor of plays and books and bathing-dresses and *general* Mussolini of Burbleton *morals*.

The expression "*loofah*" means much the same thing only the face is *oblong* and *as* a rule has the *most* lachrymose moustache composed of *rotting* straw which goes *dank* like seaweed when there is *rain* in the air.

The expression "*stoat*" is *too* similar but has an added significance of Purityrannical *venom* and *un-Christian* prejudice because of course it's *nearly* always a Licensing Justice who is *Vice*-President of the *Milk* League and deprecates fun.

2. Notwithstanding any flatulent bye-law it shall be *quite* lawful everywhere for the pictures to be open on Sunday evening, also to play games (if any) in municipal parks and things the same as a week-day.

3. No municipal yam or loofah shall have any-

thing to do with the recreations and pleasures of the people, which shall be governed where necessary by a Joy Committee of the Council, elected absolutely *ad* hoc and consisting of *two* men and a virgin, *one of these to be under thirty and the others under forty.*

4. The Joy Committee shall organise a *good* band and make it play on Sunday afternoons.

5. Every town shall have Sunday concerts in the winter months.

6. Every town shall have a public swimming-bath which shall be open on Sunday afternoons.

7. Mixed Bathing shall be *quite* lawful and any contagious comments by yams or loofahs shall be punishable with *utter* imprisonment.

8. It shall be lawful to play bagatelle and billiards the same as golf on Sunday and sections 10-14 of the Gaming Act 1845 are hereby totally cancelled likewise any similar blather.

9. The Joy Committees shall take over the powers and duties of the Licensing Stoats in relation to the recreations of the people.

10. All Prohibitionists and such-like fanaticals shall be excluded from the Licensing Bench the same as the brewers, well isn't that *too* reasonable?

11. Councillor Mule shall be washed *weekly.*

12. This Act may be cited as the Sunday (Diminution of Gloom) and Recreations of the People (England and Wales) Act 1928.

LETTER XII

KNOWS TOO MUCH

TRIX you small snake, I will *not* be ſtung with *mordant* reproaches, how *could* I write to you, my dear I'm *ſupine* on a bed of sickness and having the *moſt* complicated sufferings, but of course, if you ask me *what,* well the *doctors* call it the *rudeſt* name, but my dear the *nude* fact is that the doctors know *nothing* and I was *utterly* saved by a *Medical* Dictionary, because my dear one night at the American Embassy I suddenly asked loudly what a *sweetbread* was, because *at* that moment we were having one of those *inflating* farinaceous foods the Americans eat and I thought a sweetbread was the same sort of thing, my dear like sweet *corn* or *sweet* potato, *too* fallacious, because there was a *ſteamy* silence, and afterwards Haddock said that every public woman ought to know about the *facts* of the ſtomach and everything, which of course were *quite* Greek to your innocent little friend, so the other day I saw this *divine* book and bought it.

Well my dear I don't know if you've ever looked at a Medical Dic, my dear too *disintegrating,* though of course juſt at firſt it's rather a *hilarious* work to sort of *merely* loiter with, well you keep on coming across things like OESOPHAGUS the technical name for the gullet *which*

see, and then you look up GULLET and you see GULLET or OESOPHAGUS is *merely* the *food* canal, and my dear KING'S EVIL is an old name for Scrofula which seems rather uncalled-for don't you think, well of course I looked up SWEETBREAD for fun and it said *See* PANCREAS, and my dear it's *rather* a shock to find that the *whole* of one's thoughtless life one's had sweetbreads and pancreases and things and known *nothing* about it, my dear I don't want to *agitate* you but as a *matter* of fact you've got a sweetbread *too,* however *don't* speed off to the doctor or anything because it isn't exactly a disease, though of course as far as I can see the *whole* of life may hang on a girl's pancreas, my dear it's a *digestive* gland which secretes the *pancreatic* juice into the *small* intestine, and my dear when I tell you that it may be the seat of *cancer* and the formation of tumours which are called pancreatic *cysts* you'll understand that the sweetbread isn't *exactly* the sort of subject for table-twitter at the American Embassy, nor *yet* darling for reading in *bed,* which was where I stumbled on the murky truth, especially my dear as *besides* all this it's the *assiduous* pancreas that pours into the blood, *your* blood darling, a fluid that regulates the consumption of *sugar* by the muscles, and my dear *if* it fails to do that it says you have *one* form of diabetes, only one darling but one would be enough, I thought, and my dear if I *have* got a vice it's *sugar,* because I always have a *sweet* Martini and *never* a dry, so

of course I turned to DIABETES with dithering fingers, and my dear *imagine* my horror when I found that the *symptoms* were *thirſt* and a *voracious* appetite, and *either* loss of flesh *or* obesity, complicated my dear by *mental* depression, my dear *too* convincing, because of course I eat and drink like an emu, I 've *flung* away flesh since I was in the House, my dear I 'm *puny,* and as for depression there are times as *you* know when I feel that there 's *nothing* for it but the gas-oven, only of course I 've always been *terrified* of gas.

Well my dear by this time I was *quite* spongy with *inteſtinal* pains but I said nothing to Haddock about the diabetes, although that night the little eyes did *not* close till about half-paſt cock-crow, well the next day I *simply* cut sugar and ſtarch and flour and thick soups and oyſters and liver right out of my life, but notwithſtanding the *next* morning after rather a dawn-party at Bow-wow's I had the *moſt* suggeſtive *symptoms* in the *back* of the head, my dear a sort of cross between an *ache* and an inflammation, well I looked up HEADACHE and my dear there are *twenty-five* reasons for having a headache, from overwork and alcohol to blood-clots on the brain, *poisonous* circulations and *tumours* in the skull, my dear *too* gruesome, and of course the *blood* may be contagious through abscesses or scarlet fever or else *chronic* Bright's Disease, and my dear it *might* be the beginning of *apoplexy* or cerebral thrombosis or *brain*-fever or *water* on

the brain, which I didn't think I'd got, but anyhow the *divine* thing was that *nothing* was said about diabetes, at which I perked up buoyantly and put the whole thing down to overwork and worry, so my dear I expelled Taffeta Mole, neglected the *entire* correspondence of Burbleton, telephoned to Lewisham that I could *not* lay the foundation of the new roller-skating rink and *super*-cinemadrome, asked the Whips for a pair and pranced out to the Zoo to have a *girlish* holiday with Georgie Rowland, who has popped up again my dear only more of a Topsiphilist than *ever* before!

Well of course the *first* person we met coming out of the Monkey House was *poor* Jack Lantern who mumbled brightly at us that he'd had *all* his teeth out, which he said was *too* marvellous and *quite* everybody ought to have *all* their teeth out because he'd had no more headaches or inferior nights and bounced out of bed as fresh as a *bulb* in May-time, because he said it's the known thing now that teeth are so many *toxic* growths which merely *pollute* the blood-stream and bring on permanent *septicanæmia* or something, my dear *too* lowering, because of course from *that* moment the buoyancy sank to *absolute* zero, I had lassitude and debility and the *acutest* pains in the back, however my dear I crawled on bravely as far as the Reptiles, and *there* we met little Ivory Doon who had just discarded *her* teeth and was in a *rapture* about it, so my dear

seeing it was the done thing I *abandoned* George in chagrin and the Snake House, *flew* to my dentist and implored him to dismantle the *poisonous* mouth, however he said the little tusks were quite too taintless and utterly declined, so my dear feeling more and more rickety and mucous and everything I *slunk* home and retired to bed with *abdominable* spasms and the Medical Dictionary, because I was *too* determined to find out myself *exactly* what was the matter with me, although by this time the little head was a *mere* ferment, *agony* darling.

Well my dear in about ten minutes I found I was suffering from a *long*-neglected *kidney* complaint, *rather* aggravated by *cirrhosis* of the liver, as a *result* of which it said death *generally* supervenes, and of course with the *pancreas* not functioning as well you 'll get *some* idea of the *condition* your poor little blossom's arrangements were *in,* my dear *don't* go on with this letter if you 'd *rather* not, only I *rather* think you ought to, well anyhow I phoned *feebly* for the doctor and lay there shivering and alone because Haddock was making a speech at the Mansion House to *all* the solicitors, well of course the doctor was out and meanwhile darling I found the *most* sinister little swelling in the neck which was *probably* goitre or else *tuberculous* enlargement of the *lymphatic* glands, so my dear I sent for Annie and dictated the *most* wistful little will, I left you *two* frocks, darling and all my *celestial*

new *undies,* however the doctor came at last and said he thought I should live with *complete* rest and *no* parties for a *whole* week, only he heartlessly deprived me of my dear little Dic, which only shows you darling the *jealousy* in that profession, because as *I* said if I hadn't *known* what a state I was in I should probably have dropped dead in *harness* at the House of Commons, however Haddock said he was *too* right, and since then he 's been sending *anonymous* Medical Dictionaries to all the people he *can't* endure, with the *result* my dear that there's been an absolute *crop* of nervous breakdowns among the yams and loofahs and prawns of this island, my dear Councillor Mule himself wrote me a *poignant* farewell because he said he was just off to the doctor having found he had *incurable* myxœdema and nephritis or something, and I see that four or five notorious nose-pokers are in the invalid list with complaints unspecified so there *may* be something in it, only as I told Haddock I still think his reasoning 's mouldy because what *I* think is that one ought to utterly *face* these things because my dear health *is* everything, well *isn't* it, and my dear *without* knowledge how *can* you hope to keep a *complex* arrangement like the feminine body in order, anyhow I 've told Hatchards to send you a Medical Dic for your birthday darling, so *be* good and keep well, your rather *anæmic* little Topsy.

LETTER XIII

WINS BREAD

TRIX my poppet I 'm *rather* proſtrate once more, I 've been doing the *moſt* exhauſting *practical* ſtudy of the absolute *life* of the people, well you know it 's the done thing nowadays to have *served* in front of the *maſt* or resided in *tenements* or laboured in the *mines* and things so that one can tell the Labour Party they know *quite* nothing about it, and of course I 've always wanted to have a *rather* deeper underſtanding of the democratic ſtrata especially the toiling girls of our land, however I thought it would be *too* draſtic and repugnant to serve before the maſt or behind a counter or anything, and one day I had the *moſt* plaintive epiſtle from a girl at Grunton who was a sixpenny partner in the Palais de Danse, because she said her wages were *too* harsh and she had *quite* nothing over after paying for her room and everything, so my dear I thought I 'd *explore* the Sixpenny Partner ſtratum because if there 's one thing I *can* do as *you* know darling it is footwork at the ball, and anyhow I 'm *too* saturated with the House and all these *clammy* incantations about quinquenniums and the rates.

Well my dear I went down to Grunton but of course *too* incognito in *black* silk with a lot of *sixpenny* lace about and saw this girl who was called

Elspeth something and was *pure* fluff, my dear *too* peroxide, however *quite* matey, and she told me there was a new Sixpenny wanted and there was an absolute *audition* or something the very next day, well there were *six* other candidates, all blonde as barley-sugar, and we all *pranced* round the *spacious* floor with one of the *he*-partners, but my dear almost the *moment* the manager saw your alluring little chum he merely *stampeded* across and engaged me on the spot, of course I had *rather* conscience-trouble about the other poor females, however in a good cause and everything, anyhow Elspeth got me the *drabbest* little room in the same house as hers, my dear a mere *call-box* with the *frigidest* lino, two pound ten darling bed and board including *one* bath on Fridays, so I left all my luggage at the Metropole except one *sparse* little tin-trunk I borrowed from Annie, and settled down to a life of *utter* poverty and wage-earning, and if you could have seen me *weeping* myself to sleep with nothing but *one* wee hot-water-bottle between me and suicide, because of course *no* fire in the bedroom, my dear *too* harrowing.

And of course my dear I found that Elspeth was *too* right about the economics, because my dear it *is* complete servitude to be a Sixpenny, well we all sat in a *pen* darling, *twelve* of us, like performing dogs, of course they were all rather *curious* about your elegant Top, not that the others weren't elegant, my dear *too* ladylike,

and the *moſt* expensive *names,* my dear *Iseult* and *Auriol* and *Lillith* and so forth, but *quite* darlings and thoroughly genial, to begin with anyhow, all except two called *Amethyſt* and *Elaine* who were the two *princesses* of the pen, and rather *sniffed* about me, however I arranged with Elspeth that I was a clergyman's orphan with utterly *no* means of consiſtence, anyhow the *sole* salary you get is *ten* small shillings a week, my dear *too* inadequate, only of course every time a cuſtomer pays sixpence to dance with you you earn *threepence,* so that you see it *all* depends on *how* much you magnetise the male, my dear absolute payment by *results* which is *rather* brutal, because my dear some afternoons the place is *too* unpopulated, and of course it isn't everybody who can afford *many* sixpences for *one* dance and an attenuated encore, my dear *never* more than about *two* minutes together, so it 's *quite* a coſtly luxury, anyhow moſt of the girls reckon to make about three pounds or under, which after the rent and everything *doesn't* leave much for silk ſtockings and frocks and the *pictures, does* it, *which* latter my dear is the *sole* thing they think about, my dear it 's *too* ſtaggering, like you darling they never *peep* at the papers and my dear there were three girls *definitely* who 'd *no* idea who Mr. Baldwin was, which is *rather* fragrant and refreshing in a way don't you think?

And of course it 's the *moſt* menial and *lacerating* labour, my dear 3 to 6 in the afternoon and

8 to 12 at night, not to mention giving *lessons* in the mornings which some of them do, and if you danced *every* dance it would mean 70 dances a day and four hundred and twenty a week, my dear *imagine* the horror, and all with the *ſtrangeſt* men, *some* of whom seem to think because they 've bought you for two minutes they 've a right to you for *life,* my dear I had two or three perfectly *ſeptic* partners who made the *moſt* alarming proposals, my dear it 's *too* extraordinary the number of little *frog*-men there are who seem to have *nothing* to do but *prowl* round a Palais in the *afternoon*, and they dance *too* well only in a *leprous* ſtyle, my dear they have hands like *newts* and they *clutch* your fingers in the *moſt* messy *professional* grip as if they were holding a snake by the tail, and my dear at *any* moment one of them may utterly purchase you for sixpence, and then of course there are the *primordial* monſters with *hypertrophy* of the abdomen as my Medical Dic would call it who merely *trample* on you like intoxicated *Tanks,* so my dear the whole thing would be *too* murderous if it wasn't for what the girls call *regular* clients, because my dear it 's the done thing to have *favourite* youths who buy *blocks* of tickets and utterly book you for the evening, because *then* my dear you can *inſiſt* on sitting out now and then and have *Vanilla* Sundaes, my dear *too* poisonous, only you get the same fat fee for sitting out as dancing, which is *rather* hard on the client perhaps, especially as the

management is *too* severe, my dear one's not allowed to so much as *smile* at an old customer across the floor, *too* monastic, and personally I found most of my clients were *quite* reluctant to sit out at all.

However my dear it was this *exquisite* system that led to the *trouble,* because my dear I was a *blazing* success and was scarcely *ever* left forlorn in the pen, which was *rather* warming in a way, because my dear it *is* nice to know that one's appeal is *really* universal and *democratic* and everything, like SHAKESPEARE I mean, and my dear as one dragged the *bleeding* little toes to bed it gave one *rather* a glow to think one was definitely a *working*-girl, but then *why* is it that *whenever* I try to do good the *worst* seems to occur, because the *dire* thing was that *half* the girls' *particular* clients switched over to *me,* and especially *Amethyst's* and *Elaine's,* my dear *too* fatal, because *what* was I to do, you can't *refuse* to dance if you're a sixpenny dancer, well you can understand there was a certain *petulance* in the pen, and my dear I *can't* tell you what I heard Amethyst say to Elaine when Amethyst's elderly *pet client* who comes down from town booked your *well-intentioned* Topsy for Saturday afternoon *and* evening, and he was *rather* a dove darling because he only wanted to dance about *once* in ten, the slow waltz being his strong suit, and he bought mountains of chocolates and *gazed* yearningly only then he started to tell me about

his wife and 8 children who spent *all* his money and *never* underſtood him, so it was all on the *difficult* side, and what with Amethyſt looking *vitriol* at me, however believe me or not I ſtuck it for 8 days, though *ſo* tired darling that in the mornings I had to *creep* into the Metropole and have a Chriſtian bath, however at laſt my Elspeth who was *too* loyal said if I ſtayed much longer I should get a hat-pin in the midriff from Amethyſt or Elaine, and my dear I was ticked off *too* barbarously by the manager for being five minutes late one night, so my dear I waited till Friday when they have a sort of *Staff* meeting for complaints and everything, only nobody dares to complain, and *at* that I rose up and said that *all* the girls were *too* exploited and they ought to have an absolute *basic* salary because *how* could a girl be lady-like *and* pure for that money, not to mention *free* tea in the afternoon and something to eat at night, sensation my dear and the next day I was *quietly* sacked with a week's wages ten bob darling so that will show you, rather a *degrading* climax perhaps, however all the girls quite *wept* on my neck what with wonder and gratitude and even Amethyſt relented meagrely, and my dear I *do* know now how it feels to be a *mere* wage-girl and of course if *ever* there 's a Debate about Palais de Danses or the wages of girls I shall make the *moſt* electrical speech, no more darling your *martyred* little Topsy.

LETTER XIV

BEHAVES BADLY

TRIX darling I've *behaved* like an *utter* scorpion and I'm having *rather* conscience-trouble, however not *too* collapsing, because my dear I'm *beginning* to think that in the *lonely* crusade I'm waging almoſt *any* kind of injurious witchery is juſtified provided it comes off, my dear it's *no* use *playing the game* with rattle-snakes, well *is* it darling?

Well I've told you didn't I about the *auſtere* little Bills I've draughted and especially my disarming Bill about the Crêpe Sunday and the Recreations of the People, well my dear the Whips are *sizzling* with rage and of course the moment the Antimacassar Vote in Burbleton heard about it they rushed as *one* antimacassar to the writing-table and spat *anonymous* poſtcards at me, my dear *too* uncontrolled, my dear the *queer* thing is that everything the other side say is *too* right but everything *I* say is *base* "propaganda," however the absolute *azimuth* of impertinence was reached when I got a challenge from Councillar Mule to *debate* with him at the Annual Dinner of the Burbleton Branch of the Total Abſtinent Sons of the Salamander, which my dear is the *gross* body of the Crêpe Votes and is againſt *quite* everything from *ſilk* ſtockings to sun-bathing.

Well my dear Haddock and my agent and

everybody wanted me to take a *spurny* line about it, but the blood of the Trouts rather reacted to the tocsin, and besides I *always* believe in meeting the Amalekites face to face because quite often you find that the most repugnant of the species have some *compassionate* feature when witnessed in the flesh, my dear *too* right, because, well anyhow I accepted, and my dear I can't *begin* to describe the company, my dear you know I 'm a *comparative* fundamentalist in dogmatological matters, don't you, but my dear it *is* hard sometimes to believe that Creation was an *ordered* plan, well there were about two hundred of the tribe of Salamander, and my dear if you 'd *seen* them, well if you can imagine a *hundred* whelks having dinner with a *hundred* underdone *prawns,* of course it was all a bit *poignant* really because my dear I know you 've *never* understood psycology but the whole thing was *too* pellucid to me, my dear as Haddock put it people with fat ankles do *not* approve of short *skirts,* and that 's *most* of this municipal fussery in a nut-shell, of course there were one or two *divine* old angels with *Gladstone* expressions whom I *quite* adored and a lot like Councillor Mule who do this sort of thing for the *mere* love of nose-poking and power, but the *yellow* residue my dear were *merely* sour with hereditary frustration poor things, my dear the very *veins* are vinegar, my dear *born* jilted, and my dear it 's no good saying that appearances aren't everything, because I

always say that beauty will out if there is any and if you see *nothing* but eye-blisters in a place there must be something *radically* spurious about the *whole* institution.

However what with everything I took rather a *Christian* attitude to the rank and file, but of course I 've *always* had a *rodent* suspicion about the *malignant* complaints like Councillor Mule, and as a *matter* of fact my agent has been making rather *inquiries* lately, *whereby* darling hangs this crepuscular tale, well for *one* thing darling it seems he has the *most* Continental *library,* however I sat next to the yam and my dear he ate *too* hoggily, as total abstinents very often do I 'm told, my dear the food was *poison* and we drank *hot* water, but I must say *quite* genial, well he evidently thought he was going to *flog* me in the debate with his loyal Salamanders to hold his hand, but my dear *while* he was worrying a *rump*-steak and utterly *beaming* between bites, my dear it 's *rather* crude but you know the old story and of course you must censure Haddock and the agent as *well* as your peccable Top, well anyhow he was handed a note on his *own* paper on *which* was written in *block*-letters as I *happened* to know DO NOT COME HOME THE POLICE ARE HERE.

Well my dear the effect was *immediate,* the sparkle faded in the spongy eye and from *that* moment the edibles lost their *pristine* charm, my dear the yam peered *guiltily* in all directions

toyed *apathetically* with the steak and would *not* be tempted with a *vanilla* ice, well I was *too* solicitous and kept *hoping* there were no bad news from home and everything, but he got paler and paler, my dear I thought he would *faint,* and at last he sent out for a *brandy,* well my dear the thought of me driving the *king* vinophobe to alcoholic indulgence which is what they call a drink was *rather* hilarious, but I had conscience-trouble because I thought he really might have done a murder or something, however in *sepulchral* tones he called on me to speak and I said Well my poor miseries, *don't* think I blame you because I know *just* what 's the matter with you, you 're a *pathetic* collection of dogs-in-the-manger, you 're *incapable* of joy, you *don't* like beer, you 've got *fat* ankles, you don't *stir* from your antimacassars on Sunday and you don't see why anyone else etcetra, only of course the real *sin* is that you call all this jaundice and jealousy *virtue,* and you have the *utter* impudence to say that you know what 's good for the *poor,* well I said let me tell you my bilious women that I don't call un-Christian *gossiping* virtue, and I don't call systematic *nose-poking* virtue, and I don't call dyspeptic *inertia* virtue, and what 's more, I said, you don't care two *toots* about the poor, you only care about yourselves and your own *mingy* ideas, and besides *half* of you have got *horrible* vices, you poison your systems with tannic acid and tittle-tattle, you *peep* behind curtains, you 're *too*

petulous with servants, you 're *mean* about money, you 've no bowels of *love* or mercy or anything, and you may die sober but you 'll die in a *septic* condition of envy hatred and *all* uncharitableness, however I said as I said before I 'm *sorry* for you, and *believe* me darling I *was* sorry for them, but I said there 's *still* a hope for you if you 'll *only* come out of your *righteous* holes and *mix* with your *contaminated* fellow-creatures a little because I said you 'll find they 're *much* more congenial than you *think* and in most ways *much* more moral than you are, and anyhow I said I 'm going on with my *flawless* little Bill so there, and then I sat down.

Well my dear none of them actually *threw* things at me but the air seemed cloudy with *invisible* missiles and the applause was *perfunctional,* my dear *too* tepid, but of course *when* the Mule thing *climbed* on to its feet there was an *absolute* hurricane of *anæmic* aprobation, however the Mule was like a *whispering* jelly my dear all the accustomed vinegar and wizardry were *utterly* missing, and my dear whether he thought he might perhaps get me to *bail* him out or what, but anyhow he spent about *five* minutes *burbleing* compliments at me, to the *intense* discomforture my dear of the *daughters* of the Salamander, especially my dear as *about* this time, my dear believe me or not but I am *not* to blame for this, anyhow *all* the male Salamanders began to receive *stealthy* telegrams or notes or letters according to circs., my dear my *agent* is a *fiend* of

efficiency, and they all said I HAVE DISCOVERED ALL or NEVER DARKEN MY DOORS AGAIN or COME AT ONCE YOUR WIFE KNOWS or YOU WILL NOT BE WANTED AT THE OFFICE TO-MORROW, etcetra, and of course some of them darling absolutely *signed* and everything, I've no *idea* how it was done, anyhow one by one darling the *male* Salamanders rose up and merely *wilted* out of the room, and my dear I don't know if you've *ever* spoken but of course the effect of even *one* person rather drifting out of earshot is *fairly* lowering so *what* it must be when you see a *hundred,* especially as I suppose the Mule thing imagined that they'd *all* heard about the police in the home and everything, anyhow just as he was lumbering towards the *point* of his speech about the sixty-seventh man went out, the Mule gave a *garotted* groan subsided into his seat and then passed out into the night, and *so* much darling for the *consciences* of Salamanders.

Well darling I *rose* up and said a few *gentle* words to the residuary females who by this time were totally kickless, well I said My *pitiful* backbiters the truth has *evidently* prevailed but I *won't* rub it in, you'd better *creep* home now and *try* to be a little more *Christian* in the future, of course the *Press* were there and they described the debate as an absolute *massacre,* so in spite of the little conscience it's *rather* satisfactory and *after* this I hope to make it up with the Mule and come to a *melodious* compromise about Burbleton life, no more now your Machivellian TOPSY.

LETTER XV

PLAYS GOLF WITH NANCY

TRIX darling, I 'm *stricken,* I 've played *18* holes of golf with *NANCY* ASTOR, and of course if you *don't* know NANCY you 've *no* idea what that means, my dear she 's a *walking* dynamo, my dear *volcanic,* and I must say she 's the *most* convincing advertisement for vinophobia and *no* smoking as far as *energy 's* concerned, but of course as *I* said to her about the *12th* hole the question is *is* so much energy *desirable* on this planet, because my dear I 've *come* to the conclusion that a certain amount of spasmodic *inertia* produces the *deepest* philosophy and meditation and everything, because it 's *too* obvious that if you 're always *bounding* over fences you 've *no* time to *absorb* the scenery, and therefore it 's *quite* hypothetical that *beer* and tobacco may be the absolute *foundation* of British wisdom, well don't you agree darling?

Only my dear *don't* think I 'm being the *least* bit corrosive about NANCY because I *do* think she 's a *miraculous* person and *rather* maligned, because what *I* like about her is that *like* me she doesn't care *two* toots *what* she says to anybody, in fact in her case I should put it at *one* toot, or even less, and my dear everyone thinks she 's *too* fanatical, and of course she *is* fanatical in a *cerebral* sort of

way but not *personally,* well I mean she doesn't utterly *spurn* a person because you don't agree with her, like some of these completiſts, though of course she 'll make the *moſt* explosive remarks about you, but my dear *quite* genial because I think she 's *always* thinking she 's going to *convert* you, which of course I *now* see ought to be *juſt* my policy to Councillor *Mule* and Co., and *by* the way darling I *rather* fancy I 've made the wee-eſt *impression* in that quarter, well anyhow my dear *this* morning NANCY rang me up and said *would* I go down to *Warpsand* with her and *bring* my clubs because she was *too* saturated with this *mephitic* town and she was taking *BERNARD* SHAW to see his *firſt* game of golf and she *muſt* have a chaperon because he 's the *moſt* dangerous centenarian she knows, well my dear it sounded *rather* a party though a fraction *intelectual* perhaps for your ruſtic little friend, so I dug out the old clubs which my dear were utterly *draped* in ruſt, and we all drove down in the *vaſteſt* car, *me* my dear a *melting* little sandwich between NANCY and the great man, my dear *too* bizarre.

Well my dear *what* a journey, because of course they *quite* never ſtopped talking and I *simply* didn't utter, my dear I felt like a *very* small horse with troopers *firing* over my *body,* though in a way it was more like *two* people letting off *rockets* at the *same* time, because firſt of all BERNARD would explain that he was *unique* among mortals and long before he 'd finished NANCY would point

out that *she* was *celeſtial,* my dear they were *too* witful only I can't remember what they *said,* and I muſt say that NANCY *quite* held her end up, as she generally *does,* well anyhow they tore each other into *small* pieces all the way to Warpsand, at *which* place they suddenly discovered your *immaterial* Top lying like a *crushed* ſtrawberry *between* them, so I then *faded* into the picture with a definite *remark* about something, and they *both* began talking about something *quite* else, my dear *too* flattening.

However it all had rather throb and fun-value, and at laſt we ſtood on the firſt tee, *me* my dear with my *three* pitiful *red* clubs and *one* slightly superannuated ball, because of course I 've *never* had truck with *classical* golf I haven't played for an *epoch* and then only at Mullion, where my dear you ſtop at the *seventh* to pick mushrooms and at the *12th* for tea, I should think my handicap is about 57 and *as* a rule I *carry* my ball for the laſt few holes, so my dear *when* I tell you that Warpsand is a *haunt* of tigers with *red* coats and utter *armouries* of irons, not to mention *sponges* and *wind-gauges* and *wooden* clubs in *tropical* profusion, and of course *too* populous, my dear *platoons* of plus 5's *cluſtered* on the tee, well some of them tried a little twittery on NANCY and in about two sentences she laid them *quite* horizontal, my dear one of them said Why don't Americans practise their *principles* in England Lady ASTOR, so she said Why don't Englishmen

take their *morals* to *Paris,* which my dear I thought was *rather* rapid and pertinent, however after that she gave the caddies a *brief* homily about their *private* lives and arranged for *all* their children to join the *Band* of Hope, and then *off* she went like an *electric* racehorse, with SHAW *striding* beside her like a *Norwegian* god, my dear *too* perpendicular, and making the *most* carbolic remarks about golf, and of course your *frail* little friend trotting *feverishly* behind them from one gorse-bush to another, can you *see* the picture?

Well my dear I did the first six holes *running,* my dear mere *hockey,* because *wherever* there were brooks or bunkers or bushes or roads or *out* of bounds or *heaps* of stones or anything *quite* there I went, and of course whenever I *did* trickle back to the fairway I'd see NANCY and BERNARD absolute leagues ahead discussing Christian *Science* on the green and the *hugest* men waiting *patiently* behind me, so I *picked* up the fragments of my only ball and cantered on to the next, I think the *10th* was the first hole I definitely *finished,* and of course the girlish stamina surrendered *quite* soon because my dear the course goes up and down over the highest mountains, the little wind grew *sparse* and the little legs became two *lean* and protracted *aches,* but of course NANCY and SHAW never *turned* a hair, and I must say that G.B. is the *most* plausible ad. for vegetables and everything, only as *I* say darling well *is* it worth it, well my dear they marched *all* over the moun-

tains flinging *wit* at each other, never *pausing* for breath or *me* or anything, and on the *twelfth* tee SHAW said it was no good NANCY trying to be a *Joan* of Arc because she 'd *never* hear any voices but her *own,* so NANCY said she didn't *intend* to be a *Saint* because somebody like SHAW would go and make money out of her, so SHAW said he could never write a play about NANCY because his *appeal* was to the *intelect,* and just then I took my baffoon and drove my *only* ball over the *cliff,* my dear *too* disheartening.

Well then NANCY lent me a new ball and began on me about vinophily and everything, because *at* the moment she 's *too* whoopy about HOOVER, and *whenever* I missed the ball *too* totally she said *That's* what happens to the *cocktail-girl,* so we *galloped* along my dear *she* shouting congenial abuse about alcohol and the *brewers,* and me panting insults about horse-races and *betting,* with which as a *matter* of fact she rather agreed, only of course SHAW said we were *both* erroneous because if only it was compulsory to read *his* plays nobody would want any other pleasures at *all,* and my dear the *whole* time we were *utterly* chasing a rather *Gothical* foursome of circular old men, my dear *too* skilled but *praying* over their putts and everything, and my dear NANCY was *yearning* to *trample* over them but of course your little Top was *rather* a handicap, however *when* we came to the down-hill holes I got my fourth or fifth wind and played with one club only to save time, so we

sailed through and left the round ones *petrified* because Nancy gave them a cheery little lecture about their *physique* and the brewers and everything and Shaw said his life had been in vain if grown-up men were still *squandering* their minds on a game like *golf,* however Nancy said that if Shaw played games he 'd have a sense of *proportion* and his plays would be shorter, and Shaw said that if she read his plays she 'd have a sense of power and her drives would be *longer,* and so we *charged* along the long sixteenth because we had to get to the House, but my dear for the last two holes I gave up *all* pretence and merely kicked or carted the ball, and my dear I arrived in a *complete* lather but the others of course were *too* tireless and *fresh* as fairies, so I shunned the House and had a *mustard*-bath, and my dear *here* I am *quite* moribund in bed, however I must say it was *rather* a party, only before I go roaming the hills and dales with *those* two super-creatures again I shall have a *long* dose of vegetables and *quite* no gaspers, farewell now darling your *dormatose* little Topsy.

LETTER XVI

SOLVES EVERYTHING

TRIX darling I haven't a *moment* to write to you, my dear life 's a *cataract* just now, well my *new* house-parlour 's given notice because of the *stairs* and of course they 've put me on one of these *yawny* Committees about the *chaotical* Rates, and now I 've got to *fly* away and lay the *foundation*-stone of a Palais de Danse, my dear *too* miscellaneous so no more now, how *are* you poppet, and *would* you like to read my *deserving* little Bill about Betting and everything, my dear the *Whips* are *incandescent* about it, anyhow *here* it is, farewell your little *reformer* TOPSY.

(*Enclosure.*)

A BILL FOR THE ABSOLUTE REFORM OF THE GAMING LAWS AND ALL THAT, TO SWELL THE EXCHEQUER AND MAKE PROVISION FOR THE UNEMPLOYED.

Preamble.

WHEREAS the Briton is *born* betting, and *can* you wonder in a climate like this where *quite* nothing is certain, and anyhow it was the gambling spirit that utterly *made* our ubiquitous Empire, and if you ask me when it comes to it the

British race will be found *buoyantly* betting on the *respective* numbers of the sheep and the goats, because *quite* nobody can ſtop them and *what* is more I notice that none of these *draſtic* Savonarolas has the *nerve* to ſuggeſt it, on the contrary the Sunday papers which have the *moſt* Puritanical *leaders* have the *wideſt* pages at the end about *winners* and prices and odds and everything but of course the *nude* truth as I always tell NANCY is that *over*-betting is *juſt* as fallacious as overdrinking, in fact *worse,* because beer *is* definitely a *food* but backing a winner is a *mere* vice and of course backing a loſer a *ſin,* beſides depriving the children of their cruſts and everything, well anyhow it can't be ſtopped, but whereas we ſpend £200,000,000 per ann. on betting, not counting all these *corrupting* competitions in the papers which my dear are *mere* lotteries in fancy-dress, and of course the Inſurance papers are juſt as bad, my dear it 's all the *ſame* thing, *Money* for Nothing, but what I ſay is *can* you blame the poor because of course for *herds* of people all this betting is the *ſole* romance and radiance they *have?*

AND WHEREAS the *grim* thing is that of all the *millions* they ſpend only about *eightpence* goes to the State, and of course it 's *too* ſaponaceous to talk about its being a *ſeptic* matter for the State to touch, because whereas *when* you think that Weſtminſter Bridge was *merely* built out of the *contagious* proceeds of *State* Lotteries, and *there* it is day after day utterly *contaminating* the eyes

of our *cow-hearted* legislators, so if they 're at all genuine the first thing to do is to *demolish* same, only it seems to be a fairly substantial and clean-living bridge, and likewise also the British *Museum* was begun with a State Lottery and what about *that,* anyhow whereas it is expedient that the national betting itch should have an outlet *somewhere* and at the same time benefit the Exchequer, and whereas there are many and *greivous* evils arising out of betting, well I mean street-bookies and child-messengers and all that, but they can't be stopped because of the *bat-eyed* law, whereas of course it is much easier to *control* a thing if it is lawful than if it is *not,* well look at Prohibition, and anyhow what *I* say is that betting ought to be like motoring which is *too* lawful only you can *only* do it if you have a licence and pay taxation and *quite* behave yourself.

And whereas besides at the present time the Gaming Laws are a *suppurative* muddle of hypocrisy and injustice, well isn't it *too* childish when you think that *credit*-betting 's lawful and *cash*-betting 's a crime, because after all cash-betting means that you lose the money you 've *got* but the other way you can lose a fortune you *haven't* got, but there it is the *rich* man's bookie does everything over the King's most excellent telephones and my dear *what* about the Stock Exchange, but the poor man's bookie is chased about the back-alleys by the King's most excellent policemen, and if you call that *justice,* but where-

as of course the *thing* to do is to stamp out street-betting by having *licensed* betting-places for the poor the same as the rich and give absolute *years* of hard labour for street-betting afterwards.

And whereas the principles of this Act are therefore to

Control betting by regulation,
Keep it clean by the *most* malignant penalties,
Discourage it by cruel taxation (like drink)

and get a *mere* £20,000,000 out of it for the suffering Exchequer,

Be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, the Lords and Commons and everything, by and with, accordingly, and inasmuch, as follows:—

1. It shall be lawful to bet and gamble, except where specially forbidden, well I mean roulette and all that, and street-betting, and at football matches and things.

2. (1) No person shall make or take a bet without a *Licence,* which licence shall be endorsed or cancelled if he robs the children's bread, or steals or welshes, or fails to pay up or anything.

(2) These licences shall be renewed *annually* and any person found guilty of bet-

ting to the public danger shall not get *another* licence for at *least* two years.

3. The penalty for street-betting or betting without a licence shall be *two* years' hard *without* the option.

4. There shall be licensed and registered betting-offices for the poor the same as the rich, but limited in number and the whole thing *rather* inconvenient.

5. It shall be unlawful for *any* newspaper to give *money* to its readers on *any* pretext except *litterary* competitions and *perhaps* cross-words, provided that

(1) There shall be a *State* Lottery *four times* yearly, the *proceeds* to be devoted to Unemployment works, and

(2) *Local* lotteries and sweepstakes shall be allowed by *special* licence for the Derby and everything. The tax to be 10% on all entrance money and 12½% on all prize-money, like they do in Tasmania.

6. (1) The Betting-Tax shall be *much* higher because of course it's *too* inequitable to charge 2 per cent on a bet and 16 per cent on a Theatre Ticket, and 200 per cent on whisky, well anyhow it shall be 5 per cent *on* the course and 10 per cent *off*.

(2) The cost of a betting-licence shall be five shillings, and for a book-maker *on* the course £50 and off the course £100.

(3) Race-courses and other people permitting people to bet on their premises shall have a special licence and tax and be responsible for the said people.

7. (1) No newspapers published on the Lord's Day shall publish the odds on any horse-race or offer any aids or incitement to bet and gamble, but their reports of race-meetings shall be a *mere* record of what has happened, like divorce cases.

(2) Any Sunday newspaper contradicting this section shall be *deemed* guilty of an act calculated to *corrupt* the morals of the people and shall be utterly proceeded against as for a *misdemeanour* under the *Obscene* Publications Act 1857.

8. It shall *not* be lawful to gamble on the Stock Exchange.

9. All previous *erroneous* legislation on this subject is hereby utterly washed-out repealed and abrogated

Provided that nothing in this Act shall prevent a chap from having a friendly bet in the home about the date of WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR or

something, or *even* on a round of golf, *provided* that no such bet shall exceed the sum of £1, which I think is *reasonable* don't you.

10. And that 's about all I think, only of course this Act may be cited as The Gaming Laws Unemployment and Sunday Newspapers Reform Act 1928.

LETTER XVII

CONVERTS A WHIP

TRIX my little snowdrop *all* the compliments of the season and *how* have you survived the digestive season, I *do* hope you got the Sunlight Lamp because I could think of *nothing* else to comfort you in the *bestial* months that are before us, my dear Haddock and I have a *ten* minutes sundebauch every evening before bed, only of course *Science* changes *so* often these days and the *latest* my dear is that sunlight and fresh air are *definitely* baneful and there 's some new doctor who shuts *all* his sufferers up in a *dark* room with a bad smell, and they say it 's *too* salubrious, however unfortunately I 'd *bought* your present before I heard this, and of course after all the trouble we 've had about the *revoltage* and everything I *really* can't start pulling the house to pieces again to instal the Stale Air System, and if you think the Lamp 's *too* old-fashioned you 'd better *hide* it away darling till Sunlight comes in again.

Well my dear we 've had the *most* tribal and alimentary Christmas, my dear I do think that Christmas is the *one* season that ought to *always* be spent in the *home* but if possible somebody *else's* because here we are at the Antons' and my dear it 's *too* reposeful *not* having to *calculate* foodstuffs for *six* days ahead, and of course I *rather*

adore all the orthodox Yulery as long as somebody else has the *jading* labour of getting it ready, my dear you know I *always* respond to miſtletoe and holly when it's *there,* but as for *climbing* up ladders with *bosomfuls* of greenery, my dear *too* Scandinavian, and of course a Chriſtmas-tree *intoxicates* me *provided* I haven't had to *ſtand* on tip-toe and tie those *combuſtible* glass bobbles on to it, not to mention candles which will *not* be perpendicular, however well the Antons have their *principal* orgy at *lunch* because of their *herds* of young so of course by about tea-time there was rather a *lethargic* reaction in the house, especially as Haddock would keep playing *folk-songs* on the organ which is *quite* Paradise to Haddock but mere anguish to the *entire* vicinity, in fact at four-thirty a *moſt* expensive gueſt who is lacerated by the *beſt* music merely ordered his car and drove *petulantly* back to London, so what with everything the *old* problem arose *Shall* we raid the Barnacles and if so *how,* because you know there's an *age-long* feud between Beaver and White Ladies and they're always playing the *moſt* mature *practical* jokes on each other my dear *one* year we *all* went over to White Ladies and dressed up as the *domeſtic* ſtaff and utterly *waited* at lunch and everything, and my dear they had the *hugeſt* house-party and *nobody* spotted us till the *liqueur*-ſtage when as *luck* would have it I gave *Admiral* Flabb a *crème* de menthe inſtead of

cognac or something, my dear *too* unsuitable, however it only shows how little people notice the *menial* beings who hand them food, well *doesn't* it?

Well my dear *this* time we were all *quite* planless and not a *mind* would function, but of course I was *too* determined on witchery of some sort because Ronnie Barnacle is one of the Whips and has been a *complete* blanket about my little Bills, anyhow at *last* I had a brain-blossom, and I said *Let's* be a kind of *prawn-faced* deputation from Ronnie's constituency, because of course he's *too* pussilanimous and knocks at the knees at the *smell* of an elector, well my dear it *was* so and we all dressed up like *congenital* glooms, my dear *beards* and spectacles and *clusters* of jet and *veils* and everything, and we *flashed* over to White Ladies seven of us in the *middle* of dinner-time.

Well my dear it was arranged that *I* was to be the spokes-girl, *Mrs.* Thimblefoot of *West* Wockleham, and my dear *when* Ronnie heard that Mrs. Thimblefoot of *West* Wockleham was waiting he quite *torpedoed* out of the dining-room with the *pinkest* cracker-cap on and my dear *pursued* by two *inflammable* fairies trying to hold mistletoe over his head, my dear *too* corybantic the whole thing, so we all looked *rather* forgiving and said we'd come over from *West* Wockleham to wish our Member a *Happy* Christmas, only unfortunately we'd *missed* our connections and things were *days* late and had

had *nothing* to eat, so of course the leaſt he could do was to ask his *ſtarving* conſtituents into the feaſt, to the *intense* diſguſt of his *aſſembled* revellers, because my dear we looked like *seven* black ſtalactites, my dear *too* baroque, my dear *even* in Wockleham there can *not* be seven people like the people we were like, however Ronnie seemed to think we were *too* normal and repreſentative, which as I told him afterwards is the *kind* of miſtake the Whips *do* make, well of course the place was the usual Chriſtmas shambles and mess, my dear *almonds* and *raisins* and cracker-caps and *bits* of turkey and *mince-pies* and mottoes and *broken* glasses and balloons and everything, so of course we were *too* shocked and caſt a *cloud* of sorrow by refusing champagne, and then *Foxy* Fortescue, who my dear was made up like *Abraham* Lincoln said suddenly *Peace* Pagans have you no shame and so *then* my dear I *roſe* to the little feet and made the *moſt* spiritual speech about the absolute *significance* of Chriſtmas, because I said *Brothers* and Siſters *this* is no way to celebrate a *sacred* season, *what* brothers is all this grapery and crackerdom, these salted almonds and *cryſtallised* greengages, *what* are these fleshly berries suspended o'er the threshold and for *what* this heathen foliage on the walls, tear down the paper ſtreamers brethren and O my siſters utterly *pop* the blue balloons, because after all this is a *rather* serious day and I do *not* think that the Mayor of Wockleham would like

to think of their Member commemorating same in feſtoons of coloured paper and the *moſt* Mephiſtophely *maſk* and blowing a *penny* trumpet, not to mention a *bunch* of raisins over the *left* ear, unless of course he went to *church* this morning, because my dear Ronnie I *know* quite *never* goes to church except to marry a wife or chriſten a baby, or *unleſs* he's caught in Wockleham on a Sunday because he's *too* dependent on the *Pew* Vote, well my dear meanwhile the *whole* of our party sat scowling over their eatables like Savonarola at breakfaſt-time, and of course the Barnacle party were *too* mute and remorseful and you ought to have seen them *one* by one *ſtealthily* discarding the cracker-caps, well I said *when* we came to wish the Members happiness we meant happiness of the *soul* and the after-life and everything and not the *carnal* merriment of port-wine and miſtletoe, because I said we'd *rather* expected to find him singing *hymns* with the servants or working out a scheme to amend the *morals* of Europe, but *as* it was we felt we were *rather* redundant and had better leave them to their godless revelry, and with *these* words darling we *rose* up and marched out into the night leaving a *clammy* silence at the feſtive board.

Well my dear we *liſtened* outside the dining-room window and after about *five* minutes the sounds of hilarity began again, but *rather* tremulous because my dear I heard afterwards

that *poor* Ronnie was perfectly *dank* with apprehension because of the gossip-writers in the Wockleham papers, so then we began singing carols, at least we sang King Wenceslas because that was the *only* one we all knew, and after we 'd sung about that *over-rated* monarch about seventeen times poor Ronnie came out and flung *pocketfuls* of money into the darkness, but we said *Keep* your contagious lucre Squire, *all* we want is to save your *soul,* and then Foxy in the *most* rustical dialect began to absolutely *pray* for Ronnie's soul, which of course is *about* the most *carbolic* thing that one man can do to another in public, so my dear Ronnie fled *blushing* into the house and we sang Wenceslas a lot more and after about the tenth time somebody poured water on us from upstairs but missed, so we *all* prayed loudly for Ronnie again, and hoped that some kind angel would utterly *wean* our good young Squire from his *corrupt* companions and *flighty* London-folk and everything, so at last the *whole* house-party rushed out with the *most* homicidal umbrellas and things, so I gave a girlish shriek and we tore off our make-up *just* in time to escape a massacre, because my dear Ronnie's guests were *practically* incandescent with rage, well then we all went in and found Ronnie *quite* hysterical in the billiard-room, my dear *gulping* hot cocoa and muttering *bits* out of the Catechism which I *rather* fear is all the Scripture he remembers, well he was *too* relieved, and after that of course we

had a *magical* party, *rather* a decadent tale perhaps darling however many a true word's spoken in jest they say and I *rather* think that Ronnie will be *too* devout *next* Christmas, in the morning anyhow, no more now your little missionary Topsy.

LETTER XVIII

IS UNLUCKY

WELL Trix my aromatic angel the photographs are *divine* but why oh *why* have you removed the *fringe* because my dear in your style definitely brows are *not* the worn thing now, however they 're *rather* winsome, I *adore* the upside-down ones, but my dear you *must* be done by this new man *Moult* who does everyone in *Shakesperian* characters, my dear I 've been done as Ophelia and NANCY ASTOR is *Nature's* Portia and they all want HICKS to be Malvolio or somebody only I never heard of the man, did you?

However darling one smiles through one's miseries but as a *matter* of fact I 've been having *rather* a rancid time, by the way *do* you remember when we were tots at Beaumanoir that *morose* episode of the *head*-gardener whom we all abhorred, and one night we played *witches* and pretended that one of my dolls was *him* and stuck absolute *pins* into it and wished horrible wishes and finally *burnt* it in the nursery fire, and of course *two* days later the *unChristian* fellow got treble pneumonia and *perished* miserably, my dear I shall *never* forget it I didn't smile for *days,* and of course *ever* since I 've utterly *shunned* magic, however about a fortnight ago darling, I forget if I told you, I went with Haddock to a " surprise " party

at Mew-mew's, and my dear *to* my horror I found it was one of those synthetic *thirteen* parties *you* know my dear where you do everything *unlucky* you can think of, well of course my *first* instinct was to fly, because my dear I 'm *too* superstitious, well I can *just* walk under a ladder if urgent, but I do *not* go about looking for ladders if you see what I mean, and Haddock rather agrees, however of course Mew-mew said the whole thirteen idea would be shattered if there were only eleven, and my dear *then* it turned out that that Mrs. Green was one of the party, *after* which Haddock was *much* less reluctant, so what with everything I said I 'd go through with the agony because I always believe in *grasping* the nettles of this nettlesome life, don't you darling?

Well my dear the whole thing was *too* provocative, they gave each of us " 13 " brooches and *necklaces* of opals and little cocked hats in the *most* unlucky green, we walked into dinner under a *green* ladder with Florio's band playing *all* the inauspicious tunes there are and my dear a *mechanical* magpie fluttering on the left, well when we sat down we found *all* the knives crossed and the *largest* salt-cellar in front of everybody to upset, and my dear the curtains weren't drawn so the *whole* time you could see the new moon through *glass* which of course is *too* unpropitious, well my dear the first thing was that we *all* had to utterly *upset* the salt-cellars and *not* throw any over the shoulder but *help* your neighbour to salt

instead which you know is a *deadly* thing to do, my dear I was *emerald* with aprehension and of course the *really* unlucky thing for me was the *intense* proximity of Mrs. Green, who my dear was *next* to Haddock, while I had *Mr.* Green and a perfectly *deciduous* youth who the whole time *ecstasised* about the Russian Ballet, my dear he could *think* of nothing but a single ankle-waggle which Calomelovksa or somebody used to do in *Apéritifs,* which left me *too* lukewarm especially as every two minutes one had to do some *injurious* act, my dear the butler brought us each a cameo looking-glass which we had to utterly *smash* with a hammer and throw into a basket, well my dear that was *merely* more than I could face, because my dear *seven* years is *rather* much, isn't it, so I *missed* my mirror and slipped it into the basket *unshattered,* only of course Mew-mew was *too* nosy about shirking and everything so she *inspected* the fragments and found mine and it all came out and I had to, my dear *too* humbling, and of course what was such *vinegar* was that *there* I was my dear chattering with terror and moony with boredom about the Russian Ballet but all the time *Haddock* was quite *swimming* in the liquid eyes of the Green siren, and my dear having *such* fun that he didn't care *what* he did, my dear mutilating looking-glasses right and left and *dissipating* the salt and utterly bubbling with ill-omened quotations from Macbeth or something and of course the *solitary* balm was that instead

of drinking to people's *good* health and everything it was the done thing to utterly *curse* them, though of course *quite* jocular, so my dear you should have heard me *showering* ill wishes at the Green attractor and *meaning* every word.

Well my dear and so the *ghoulish* meal dragged on, my dear we sang *Three* Blind Mice and lit *three* cigarettes with one match, and said optimistic things without *ever* touching wood, and they brought in a *live* peacock, my dear I don't know how the others felt really, but as for me all the *feasible* misfortunes merely thronged in the little brain, and of course you know that *if* you 're thirteen it 's the first person who gets up perishes or something, well my dear I was *quite* determined that whatever happened it wouldn't be *me,* because my dear there *are* limits, and I think perhaps Mew-mew had the same idea, anyhow *when* she caught the eye of the females we both *began* to get up and then subsided swiftly and looked for lipsticks under the table, with the *result* my dear that the *Green* thing was *quite* the first riser, my dear *too* malignant, but I thought no more of it and after a few tiresome unlucky games I tore Haddock away and *speeded* home, *expecting* my dear to find the *house* in flames and the bailiffs *massing* round the ruins, however all was reasonably tranquil, except that all the *dankest* people in London had rung up meanwhile and asked us to dinner, and as a matter-of-fact for a brief space afterwards the gods seemed to really be rather on

the Haddock side in one or two ways, and my dear *Mew-mew* says she 's backed *nothing* but winners since and *all* her shares have gone to twenty-seven *eighths* or something.

But my dear *what* was my horror, well when I tell you that a few days later Haddock came in with a *church-yard* countenance and said that Mrs. Green had gone into a Home and was *at* that moment *discarding* her appendix, my dear *imagine* the condition of the guilty bosom, because of course I saw absolute *visions* of your innocent little Top decorating the dock and suspended from *giblets,* because I was *quite* satisfied she 'd have peritonitis or blacken my life by dying under the dope, and of course the *savage* thing was that we couldn't *approach* the creature for two days, my dear I went about *wilting* from policemen and took to reading poetry in bed, which Mew-mew says is always a bad sign, and of course I *couldn't* tell Haddock about my *acute* conscience-trouble while of course *he* thought it was *too* Christian of me to be so concerned about the witch, my *dear* how I suffered, well the *second* she was visible I bought *all* the grapes in the Metropolis and van-loads of flowers and rushed to the bedside, and my dear *there* she was looking frail and enchanting in a *cloud* of hair, but of course heartlessly *well,* my dear no *tubes* or complications or anything and not a sign of slipping starward, however I didn't trust her an inch, because I know the type, my dear I was too sure

she 'd have relapses and quietly *drift* away, so of course *ever* since I 've been like a guardian bee about the sacred bed, my dear busy with *books* and *scent* and *sweetmeats,* my dear I rang up twice nightly and I sat with her for *weeks, too* jading, because my dear you know what an *advantage* an operation gives a girl particularly if you can look like a tropical *lily* on the pillow, my dear that sort of *succulent* allure like *printed* velvet, *too* lush, and of course those *lavender* eyes, my dear I do *not* blame Haddock a *fraction,* only of course *he* didn't see much of the magnet poor dupe because there were always platoons of men in the queue, however she and I became *too* fraternal and kissed like *bosoms,* only of course *when* she talked about *how* to manage Haddock and everything it was *rather* torment because I had to sit there and merely *beam* at the little afflicted angel while of course utterly *aching* to tear her from the bed and *beat* her, however my dear all 's well etc. because she 's going home to-day I think, but my dear that 's the *last* time *I* play the wanton with superstition and everything or wish the *flimsiest* harm to my foulest enemy. *Later,* O *gosh,* darling I 've just rung up and what *do* you think, the witch has gone and got *complications* and the temperature 's bounding, my dear that 's *just* like her, I *know* she 'll die on me, my dear I must fly and get a *hundredweight* of grapes, *what* a life farewell now and pity your palping little homicide, Topsy.

LETTER XIX

CONVERTS THE COUNCILLOR

Trix my little ring-dove it 's *too* sensational I 've *practically* converted *Councillor* Mule to *moderate* sanity well my dear I *know* I told you about my rather *skunkish* conduct at the Salamander dinner, well my dear he was *so* beflattened that the little *feminine* heart was *totally* melted, and besides it 's *quite* my policy to conciliate rather than *inflame* the foe, that is of course if they 're not too *utterly* impalpable, because my dear that *is* after all the absolute cream and *redolence* of practical politics, well don't you agree darling, anyhow *soon* after that in a fit of *girlish* remorse I *invited* the repugnant person to *dine* at the House and mutually examine the *comparative* absence of cordiality between us, and my dear I apologised *winningly* for my *rather* cod-like behaviour at Burbleton but adding of course that *quite* nothing but his *abnormal* toadery could have provoked a gentlegirl to *such* proceedings, anyhow he came and of course my dear you can say what you like about *despising* politics but there *is* just *something* about the House of Commons which utterly disarms the ravening lion, my dear I 've seen *constituents* come there quite *oozing* at the ears with poison and splutter, my dear *too* Vesuvial, and they *go* away like per-

forming pigeons, but my dear whether it's the architecture or the girlish charm, anyhow the *Mule* came and he *wolfed* his whitebait and adored the *entrée,* my dear the food was *uneatable* as usual but he knew no better, and of course I introduced him to everybody who came in, my dear *Councillor* Mule the Burbleton Dynamo, which gave *definite* pleasure though rather bewildered because I made most of them Lords or Cabinet Ministers, so that *about* the savoury the iceberg melted and it came out that he was *faintly* wounded with his own fanaticals because it seemed there'd been sulphuric whisperings and utter innuendoes in the camp, my dear I gather it was *even* suggested that he'd *rather* surrendered to *my* pagan fascinations, anyhow I was *too* compassionate but tactful darling, well I *merely* said Well it *only* shows you, and *what* a warning to have *no* truck with the fanatical fowl, and so we parted in a sort of *septical* neutrality.

However my dear strike while the victim's *tottering* is my motto, so my dear to Haddock's *intense* reluctance I invited the Mule to stay the New Year week-end with us, my dear the *suffering,* but of course I wanted to show him how *too* innocuous are the worldly pleasures which *so* upset the tribe of Salamander, so we took him to one of the more *ascetical* night-clubs where the sole sign of revelry is the hoarse laughter of the police, and of course he expected to see *drugs* and *dice* and *debauchery* and *drinks,* and *vampires*

and bat-women and *carnal* dancing, but of course what he *did* see was a few *stilted* suburbans doing *clockwork* waltzes in *slow* time and a few *austere* theatricals drinking *coffee* and orange-juice because it was after hours, and my dear the whole thing like a choir-treat which is *not* going *too* well, well my dear I introduced him to Bryan Bare and his lady who my dear are in *Ibsen* just now and they were eating a *dangerous* kipper after the labours of the day and we discussed the *Repertory* Movement and the influence of *Checkov* or somebody and *what* is genius and *has* Music a *meaning* and everything, my dear, you never *heard* such *ventrifugal* talk and as for the Mule, well my dear Brian and Pearl explained that they *never* could eat before doing a high-brow play because it turned the food sour and they had *agonies* of heartburn in the fourth or fifth Act, and just then Miles Anderson came in who my dear is on one of the papers and had missed his dinner through having to write the *longest* leader about the *Church* crisis, and also Twiggy Marlow and Marion Flake who 'd been rehearsing a film without food since daybreak, so they all had kippers which of course was all *rather* tuneful and opportune darling, because as I observed to the Mule there *are* people who practically *have* to eat at midnight, and anyhow why *not,* because what *has* it got to do with anyone else, well the Mule *quite* concurred and Pearl was *too* benignant to him because I *think* she thought

he was a *wealthy* cotton spinner going to put *money* into the Drama, and meanwhile the atmosphere of kipper was *so* pervading that even the Mule succumbed and kippered, and my dear *such* is the effect when Pearl turns on her *plausible* little lamps that by about half-way through the *second* kipper his *whole* life-policy about actresses had changed, and he'd *quite* decided to have Repertory Movements *all over* Burbleton and Pearl had promised him an absolute *box* for *Ibsen,* and that my dear was absolutely *that.*

Well my dear on Sunday *flushed* with triumph I proceeded with the selfless mission and took him to a *Sunday* Concert of *Good Music,* my dear *too* lowering, especially as Haddock declined to come because he said there *were* limits, anyhow we two went and my dear I could have screamed with lassitude, my dear the *most* amorphous little *German* songs and *protuberant* contralto women sort of *heaving* about *fairies,* and *anæmic* Andantes and things on the piano, my dear I *swear* to you there wasn't the *taint* of a tune from beginning to end, however as I said to the Mule there *are* people who openly *enjoy* that sort of noise, and *if* so why *not,* because it does *nobody* a mischief but of course in Burbleton *all* music is *too* illegal on Sunday, anyhow my dear tireless in well-doing *that* evening I took him to the *nearest* cinema, and my dear *all* this time by the way the melting monster was *rather* beginning to *rather* like me because of course he's

accuſtomed to the *ſoureſt* females, well there was the *moſt* uplifting film about a business man who *utterly* made good and didn't go off with the ſtenographer after all because at the *critical* moment he *ſuddenly* remembered his mother's knee and how he was taught the *Catechism* and everything, my dear *pure* suet but of course the Councillor was *too* impressed, and my dear we were *quite* ſurrounded by the *tender* proletariat, so I ſaid *how* much better for the great heart of the people to be able to *hold* hands in here and see a film with an *antiſeptic* message inſtead of having to cuddle in paſſages or crawl about the ſtreets clicking or merely *dwindle* into the pub like they do at Burbleton, well he ſaid there was ſomething in that only of course they oughtn't to want to hold hands on Sunday, ſo I ſaid not before lunch perhaps but if they 'd been to church in the morning a little *Platonic* clinging at the pictures in the evening wasn't a menace and he ſaid *Too* right but *had* they?

However my dear the change in him was quite *chemical,* because every *hour* he was away from the vinegar-women of Burbleton (Weſt) he *increaſed* in charity and *loving-kindneſs,* and my dear the laſt night we *quite* perſuaded him to make a *perſonal* visit to the *Black* Swan which my dear is the *moſt* darling old pub round the corner with a *floral* garden where they have the *moſt* mediæval *ſkittle* alley at the back and Haddock 's the abſolute *Preſident* of the Skittles Club and

thinks he 's *too* important, well of course they have *Associations* and matches and things and *that* night there was a match between the Black Swan and the *Full* Moon, and my dear it 's like the *moſt* County cricket, you can hear a *germ* breathe, and my dear I don't really underſtand it but I do try, anyhow they play 8 a side or perhaps it 's 9 and they have 9 sort of *nine*-pins, unless it 's 8, and it 's all *too* athletic and scientific, because they throw the heavieſt kind of *flat* round thing which my dear is called a *cheese,* and my dear the *real* throb is when they knock *all* the 8 9-pins down with *utterly* one blow of course it 's all rather like *golf* really only I can't explain, anyhow they 're the *moſt* cordial and disarming fellows and *too* sober because of course you can't throw a cheese ſtraight otherwise, however of course there was *beer* and my dear in the interval we had *pickled* onions and *bread* and gherkins, consumed in the fingers, my dear *too* democratic, well the Black Swan won and my dear laſt year it seems they won a *silver* cup, anyhow there were cheers and speeches, *too* Eton and Harrow, and my dear the Mule sat *gaping* because of course his *one* idea was that *nothing* happens in a pub but *alcohol,* and my dear knowing nothing of his *repugnant* paſt they were *too* sweet to him, because my dear they 're *Nature's* gentlemen, and the Captain asked him to make a speech, and what with the New Year and goodwill flowing to such an extent he *actually* gulped

a *glass* of beer, after which my dear we took him home to bed, and this morning darling he said he 'd had his *life's* holiday, so I said Well *darling* Councillor *do* try to think more about the pleasures of the people and a *little* less about the ideas of the *Aunts,* and he said he definitely would because he said his eyes had been *quite* opened and henceforth he 'd be a *complete* moderate like *me,* and *then* darling the obese old thing utterly *kissed* my hand, *rather* moving my dear because I do believe that the life of Burbleton is going to be changed for the brighter, *all* owing darling to your *laborious* little TOPSY.

LETTER XX

STARTS A SALON

TRIX my little sunrise you were *rather* a toad not to come down for my *inaugural* salon, however of course if the foxes are becoming *such* a menace that you can't spare a *single* day from *nobly* destroying the same of course I *quite* understand, only what I *do* say is *why* not do the thing *scientifically* darling, because what *is* the use of *modern* artillery and *poison* gas and everything if you have to spend absolute *months* of the year *defending* the poor farmers and have *quite* no intercourse with your own true friend?

However *your* loss my dear, because really it was the *century's* party, though not *quite* according to *plan* perhaps, well my dear I've *always* meant to have an *absolute* salon but of course *too* original and not all this *undiluted* peerage-cum-politics stuff, because my dear you know what *most* of these Cadogan crushes are like, my dear nothing but *sedative* Under-Secretaries and the *teeming* daughters of the *danker* Duchesses, my dear you'd *think* that *politics* was the *one* thing that anybody *did,* whereas of course only about *one* Briton in every thousand ever *thinks* of the things, and of course they all *hover* about in *Garters* and Decorations and whisper *municipal* jokes about the *Local* Government Bill, anyhow I

was *too* determined that *my* salon should be *quite* heteraneous and *representative,* so my dear I had sort of *two* parties in one, well first I asked all the *right* people my dear *Ministers* and *Whips* and *all* the congenital K.C.B.'s and *quite* unmarriageable Belgrave beauties, and *then* I asked a herd of *un-Cadogan* but first-prize people, my dear editors and barristers and doctors and *novelists* and Arnold Bennett and everything, and also about ten of the *most* vociferous Labour Members, my dear Maxton and Kirkwood are *Nature's* lambs when you know them, and then a perfect *shoal* of rather *Bohemian* people acquainted with Haddock, my dear actors and actresses and the *shaggiest* painters, of course *utterly* respectable up to a point but definitely *tainted* with the arts and in fact most of them *rather* living by their *wits,* as they say *rodently* in the police-courts, however well anyhow Mum let me have the feudal home for the night and for the sake of harmony we *bisected* same and we labelled that *desert* of a drawing-room *Olympus* which was Haddock's idea and Mum's sort of studio-music-room beyond it we called *Arcadia,* and of course *Olympus* was intended for the Blue Blood and Garter Brigade, where my dear I had *gold* chairs from the Stores and the *most* ranunculous orchestra who played *ethereal* chamber music by a man called *Spotti* or *Batti* or something, and of course *no* food but the *most* invisible sandwiches and a *rather* anæmic claret-cup, so that in between these ghastly sonatas

and things the Orders and Decorations could ſtand about like animated waxworks and discuss the Housing of the People Act and your *bromidical* hunting-ſtuff in the usual salonical way, but of course anybody who was *too* alienated could *creep* off into Arcadia, where my dear the commisariat was sausages, vulgar my dear but *quite* hot, with *mash* and everything, not to mention a *degraded* barrel of *Lager* Beer, of course sausage-parties are the done thing now, but *I* 've been giving them for *simply* years, and of course cushions on the floor for the seats of the weary, and my dear the *quainteſt* girl called Elsa Lanchester who sings those *bizarre* songs of the Albert Epoch and does low life and everything, *rather* a melodious arrangement don't you think darling?

Well anyhow at firſt it worked *too* flawlessly my dear the Prime came as a *unique* favour because of course he utterly *shuns* parties, but I 'd told him it was *quite* likely it would turn out to be a pipe party in the end, also Winston and H. G. Wells and quite *herds* of high-lights, my dear I can't tell you the crush was cruel and the tiaras *blinding,* but of course nearly all the Haddock contingent took *one* look at the Duchesses and things and *ſlunk* on into the other room, likewise the Labour lads, who my dear I 'd told particularly not to dress unless they wanted, and only my *rugged* Kirkwood ſtayed behind and had the *maddeſt* argument with *Ellen* Wilkinson who my dear is rather a bosom of mine these

days because she 's the *moſt* miniature and sagacious little witch with the *moſt* ornamental hair, my dear *too* auburn, well my dear our minds are gloves about nearly *quite* everything and we 'd *juſt* agreed that Spotti's music was *too* meagre and *tinklinabulous* when suddenly I *looked* round and found that the room was *half*-empty, imagine my horror, because my dear the PRIME had vanished and WINSTON and everybody and of course I thought O gosh the Spotti sonatas have *revolted* the Cabinet, but my dear at *that* moment in rushes Haddock in an *emotional* ſtate and says *All* is loſt because the *sausages* are running out, sensation darling!

Because of course I *knew* I 'd ordered enough sausages to feed the *entire* tribes of Bohemia and Bloomsbury, however I *cataracted* out into the other room, and there *what* do you think, my dear *more* than half of the haughty Cadoganry had *slunk* away and joined up with Bohemia and there they were my dear, *golloping* sausages with ill-concealed ecſtasy, my dear as if they 'd *quite* never had food before, *Garters* darling *tiaras* and all, my dear *too* unsuitable, there likewise also was my dearly-beloved PRIME merely squatting on a cushion against the wall, puffing at the old pipe and looking *far* far happier than I ever saw him before, because my dear *quite* nobody was paying the *tinieſt* attention to him which muſt be *pure* balm to a PRIME don't you think, in faſt I saw one of the hairier Nohomians go up and ask him for

a *cigarette* of all things thus *rather* demonſtrating my dear that he'd *no* idea who the gentleman *was,* and my dear you should have *ſeen* the PRIME's seraphical smile when he realised that at *laſt* nobody wanted to get *anything* out of him except a cigarette which he *couldn't* supply, well my dear there too also were WINSTON and H. G. WELLS and the *LORD* CHANCELLOR in the silkieſt breeches because he'd *juſt* come from the Woolſack or somewhere, all clutching *ſausages* darling and *too* engroſſed in the LANCHESTER girl who was ſinging the *moſt* plebeian ſong about charwomen or ſomething which Haddock wrote for her, only of course meanwhile the *ſausage* ſituation was *too* precarious ſo I fled to the kitchen and organised a kipper or two, and my dear *when* I got back the party was in *full* flower because they'd ſtarted dancing and of course the *one* canker was that the *withered* orcheſtra in the *other* room were ſtill *grimly* playing the *vegetarian* compoſitions of Spotti and Batti to about ſeven depreſſed Dowagers and Charles Street chaperons who were repelled by ſauſages and would keep ſending *ſulphuric* meſſages to their wandering girls who of course were utterly *embedded* in Bohemia, however having extracted and evacuated ſame I comforted the muſicians with *mundane* refreſhment and the party ſettled down to a *flawleſs* rhythm, I had a dance with WINSTON, my dear *too* vigorous, and then we had the *world's* chic cabaret, my dear ARNOLD BENNETT ſang the *ſweeteſt* ſong about a

youth and a maid sucking cyder through a ſtraw or something, and MAXTON did his piratical turn, and Haddock sang a *deplorable* ditty my dear I can't *tell* you and NANCY imitated a hunting *peer,* and crowds of others only I can't remember, and of course *simply* everybody got on with *quite* everybody, my dear you saw the *ſtrangeſt* couples, *Tories* and Socialiſts, theatricals and K.C.B.'s, and my dear *there* sat the PRIME all beams and baccy, sort of presiding happily over a *united* nation, because really my dear it *only* shows you what *comparative* flip-flap politics *is,* because you *merely* need a little sausage and bonhomie and the heart of the Empire utterly beats as *one,* anyhow they all said it was a *hiſtorical* party and *my* salon darling 's going to always be *quite* miscellaneous, farewell now your rather *exhauſted* TOPSY.

LETTER XXI

TROUBLE IN THE HOME

O Trix my fortunate spinster I've had an *epileptic* day and I *must* unload the lacerated soul, of course the *truth* is that the *throes* of being a public woman are quite enough for one mortal my dear *without* having to cope with a *private* life to boot, and my dear I'm *beginning* to think there *may* be something in all that *avunculous* chat about *woman's* place being in the home and not in the House, and *what's* to happen when the twins arrive if any, I shall have to utterly *park* them somewhere or retire to the Chiltern Hundreds or something.

Well my dear it *began* at *9.0* this morning when I had to *sack* the cook, my dear *agony,* or rather it began about *1.0* this morning when Haddock started to *read* in bed, because my dear you know I'm utterly for self-determination and everything but I *have* begun recently to rather *mould* my Haddock, only my dear he's *rather* unplastic I find and he has the *most* unorthodox habits, of course I know that writers are never *too* normal but I do think the mate of a public woman ought to shave when he gets up instead of just before *lunch,* don't you darling, only of course I do *rather* sympathize because I'm *never* conscious till an hour after breakfast myself, and

my dear the *torment* of ordering meals in an *utter* ſtupor, however then there are his clothes, of course since we were blighted I 've *inſiſted* on his having *two* suits but my dear in *three* days he can make the *neweſt* suit look like a bagful of *bulbs,* because my dear he puts *all* he possesses in the pockets and *all* the letters he 's ever received, my dear his note-case is one *protuberant* mass of *everything* except notes, so about *once* a week I have a *bird's-neſting* day and ruthlessly evacuate the *loose* tobacco *and* pipe-cleaners and *patent* medicines and *pieces* of ſtring, my dear *too* miscellaneous, and then my dear he 's *indecently* untidy about the house, my dear he leaves everything *quite* everywhere, my dear there are always *pipes* in the bath-room and pyjama-fragments in the dining-room, and little *deposits* of tobacco all *over* the house, I have to sort of follow him about like one of those *mechanical* reapers *picking* up the sheaves, and of course the ſtaff gets more and more subversive, and my dear the cook has been *too* democratic about *late* meals and because Haddock will burgle the larder and *mutilate* the cold bird at midnight, so my dear *yeſterday* I utterly determined to hand the harpy her passport and give Haddock rather a *lecture,* because my dear for the firſt few months the beſt brides *procraſtinate* somewhat, but there comes a moment when one has to merely assert the little self as you 'll find darling.

However easier said than done, because my

dear I was *all* prepared with a rather *moving* little homily when Haddock bounded into bed and said *Did* I mind if he finished his *book* which was that *Octopus* book I told you about, well my dear I was *rather* wounded because my dear he 's never read in bed *before,* of course we *both* read at meals if we 're alone which is rather a *sagacious* habit don't you think my dear we sit and masticate *too* mutely over blood-yarns and the like, and I 'm *quite* sure that if *all* connubial couples, however when it comes to reading in *bed,* because my dear after the bath and the breathing exercises that 's *just* the time the little brain is *utterly* prolific, my dear I *burgeon* with ideas and luminous hypothesises, my dear *what* a word, because sometimes I 've made notes of the absolute *theories* I 've had on the snowy pillow and in the morning they 're *too* inspired still, so you see one rather *counts* on Haddock to be *rather* receptive just then, well my dear as usual my *worminous* good-nature betrayed me and I said *Too* welcome, and of course meanwhile such was the shock and chagrin I 'd *quite* forgotten about the *lecture* darling, however never go back on your word when dealing with a child or husband, so I lay quiet and suffered, my dear *rather* pathetic because I had a *sudden* attack of *morbid* wisteria if you know what I mean, well I *quite* felt that this perhaps was the absolute *beginning* of the end, my dear I must have been dormatose because I sort of looked down the vistas of the years and

saw Haddock reading the *whole* of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* for *quite* ever and *me* my dear lying *neglected* under the first five volumes, however I *bore* the vision for a long time bravely, my dear with scarcely a *sigh* or a weary turn-over, which is what I sometimes do when in the martyr-mood darling, because anyhow Haddock was too impervious, my dear perfectly *embedded* in architecture, and at last my dear I suddenly found myself *whimpering* mouldily into the dewy pillow, well then of course he was *too* concerned and utterly *flung* the Octopus away, only as luck would have it I rather *blurted* out a few puss-remarks about that Mrs. Green, who my dear was at the Antons' the other day and of course a *whole* week-end gave me *rather* spleen-trouble because my dear she *is* magical, only thanks be Haddock doesn't like her new hair-policy, my dear *drawn* back and the ears naked, the woman 's *moony,* with *that* face, however the *igmonious* thing was that I'd *quite* intended to be *too* Christian only I wasn't, so we had rather a *tropical* little talk, my dear utterly harmonious in the end of *course* only what with the vipers of remorse and remembering *all* the things I *ought* to have said I *merely* didn't close the eyes till those garrulous birds began their *redundant* anthem to the dawn and everything, while of course *Haddock* slept the entire night like a *new* kitten only noisily, my dear *too* insouciant, that 's men all over darling.

Well my dear blithe virgin that you are, *imagine* after a night of suffering having to *totter* kitchenward and sack your *first* cook, my dear feeling *exactly* similar to an *under-done* egg, my dear *no* solidity and *liquid* at the top, of course there 's *no* doubt that I 'm *far* too Christian for this world darling, because my dear she 's *behaved* like a beetle, her *cooking's* primæval, she *banquets* the tradesmen, she has *pains* in the back and sides and will *not* do the doorstep properly, my dear *forgive* these utterly *plebeian* details but that 's the holy estate of *matrimony,* anyhow I was *quite* macadamous and I drifted in like a *relentless* jelly-fish with the cruel words *tip-toe* on the little tongue, only of course she *would* choose *this* morning to be *too* boracic, my dear *no* pains in the back and *yearning* to do my *favourite* casserole and looking forward to *Easter,* and my dear *mock* and corrode as you will but I was *totally* disarmed, and of course she was our absolutely *first* cook and welcomed the bride home and everything, anyhow I was feeling *such* putty that I postponed the *whole* thing till lunch-time, well then my dear *Taffeta* Mole must ring up and say she 's not the right temperature and can't function to-day, so my dear Haddock having gone out rather *tersely* to a publisher I had to face the *whole* correspondence of Burbleton under my own steam, and my dear I was *just* mastering the *most* suggestive letter from the Vigilance Committee about *three* girl stowaways who went

to South America or Bristol or somewhere when *up* comes Hetty to say the *scullery-drain's* stopped up and Annie's come over *queer,* my dear how I *abhor* women.

Well I telephoned *tenaciously* and was put on to everyone in London except a plumber, and of course meanwhile that *demented* fellow came from Fluke's about the dining-room chairs, my dear he's *nailed* on my *unpriceable* tapestry *upside-down,* however I hunted the girl to bed with aspirins and menaces and *rang* up specialists and of course *when* a man arrived to *tune* the piano I merely *babbled* at him, my dear I felt like a *congested* pin-cushion and one more stab made utterly no difference, well it turned out that Annie had *scarlet*-fever and of course *at* that moment it's announced that *all* the water's to be turned off and they've got to *excavate* the street, so my dear we had *cold* mutton for lunch which is Haddock's *pet* horror, the cook came up and was *too* ungenial because she said there was damp in the house, and my dear *having* lost Annie so far from *sacking* the adder I had to utterly *raise* her wages, and of course the *whole* time that bestial fellow was *torturing* the piano, well then Haddock comes back and says brightly that he's *just* run into Mrs. Green on the Tube, however darling *don't* think I'm *weakening* or anything, only I think perhaps sometimes when a virgin rather aches for the altar she doesn't quite visualise the *wintry* future, and I think there may

be something *quite* consoling about being an old maid, however to-morrow doubtless I shall be your own sunny bubble again, so farewell now your rather *tragical* Topsy.

LETTER XXII

ASKS QUESTIONS

WELL Trix my little gilliflower it 's *rather* a throb, you remember last November I told you about the *hat-trouble* I had in the House owing to some *babyish* rule about raising a point of order *sitting* down with a *hat* on and I hadn't a hat, well my dear now the Speaker has *scotched* the said rule so I haven't *quite* lived in vain, however I *do* believe I 'm going to *lose* the Whip, my dear I 'm *too* unloved, because well the House is quite *gangrenously* boring at present, my dear they *drone* along with these *suety* Government Bills which *nobody* understands except the *Civil* Servants who are the absolute *kings* of the castle these days, my dear Haddock says we 're not a limited *monarchy* or democracy or anything any longer but an unlimited *burocracy,* though I don't suppose *that* will keep you awake darling anyhow the *private* Members can do *quite* nothing except *waddle* through the Lobbies *whenever* the bell rings like perfectly drilled ducks, except of course that we 're not allowed to *quack,* and my dear it 's all very well for the Gov to say they must have *all* the time for their *adipose* Bills, but what they *don't* seem to realise is that if they can't keep the *Members* interested in the mouldy Parliament how *can* they expect the man-in-the-Tube to be,

and the *nude* truth is that *nothing* people talk about in the home is ever *mentioned* in the House, well my dear you remember what *mustard* I was to begin with but of course now I merely *trickle* into the place about as brightly as a stagnant pond, and almost my *one* amusement is to *suddenly* crash into the Smoking-Room and see *all* the male legislators dry up with their mouths open in the middle of a *masculine* story, my dear *too* unwelcome.

However darling even that 's rather a *palling* pleasure and I thought that *somehow* I must get my money's worth out of the club so I 've taken to *tormenting* the man HICKS with *Parliamentary* questions, of course I know you think I 'm moony about HICKS, and people keep *goading* me to *leave* him alone, but my dear he 's like a *baby* the *moment* you leave him alone he does something *too* ghastly, my dear I hadn't *uttered* about him for *weeks* when suddenly he erupted with three perfectly *flatulent* speeches about Dora being *dead,* and of course the very same day I saw a man was fined because the number-plates on his car were too *large,* and also a *stainless* publican was prosecuted *merely* darling because somebody played the piano in the *bar* and the criminals present joined in the *chorus* and the man hadn't a *music*-licence and of course there were *three* detectives sniffing *busily* at the window, can you *see* the picture, so *English* darling, because my dear it seems if one man sings at the piano it 's *too*

lawful but if *three* men sing it 's felonious, well darling I put down a question about this mean and *smelly* affair and Hicks as usual said it was the *law* of the land and he couldn't interfere, so my dear I started *pelting* the person with *Supplementaries,* and I said Well if *that's* the law had he taken *any* steps to have it altered during the last four *years,* and he took six words to say *No* as the *loquacious* custom is, so I said *Is* it not a fact that the *sole offence* in this case was that people were *enjoying themselves* and did he *still* think Dora was *dead* and he said Certainly, so I said Well *does* the Right Honourable Hicks know the song about John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave but his *soul* goes utterly *marching* on, because my dear *that* is the crystal point and of course the *whole* House broke into a *bronchial* cheer and Auntie refused to answer, though I thought the discomforture was *too* too noticeable.

Well my dear *thus* heartened I made the holiest kind of *vow* to ask him at *least* one question a day, though of course it 's all *so* difficult, because you have to submit *every* question to the *Clerk* at the Table who is perfectly encrusted with the *most* kindergarten *rules,* well you *mayn't* ask a question which is *hypothetical* or a statement of *fact,* or contains arguments or inferences or imputations or *epithets* or controversial or *ironical* expressions, which doesn't leave *much* well *does* it darling, for instance if I put down a question like this

To ask the Home Secretary if he is not a *well-meaning* but *inflated* solicitor

this *pedantical* Clerk would merely scratch out *well-meaning* and *inflated* which of course *are* utterly the *operative words,* my dear how *can* you discuss Hicks *without* using a *sporadic* epithet or two, my dear the man 's *too* negative as it is, my dear he 's one protracted NO, *too* marvellous at stamping the heavy foot, but *where* is the helping hand, well my dear what *has* he done except *trample* on the pathetic Bishops and *tread* on the Trade Unions and *prance* about on the publishers, *turn* out the Russians by the raid on Arcos and *keep* out the Americans by the raids on the West End, my dear his *one* idea is raids and regulations, my dear as Haddock says he has the *raid-mind,* he is definitely the *Raid-King,* but as for *creating* anything, well my dear you *won't* remember but in 1924 he announced with a *loud* bang that he was going to utterly *clean-up* the night-life of London because of Wembley and the *chaste* Colonials and everything, and my dear *here* he is in 1929 still *loudly* announcing that he is *definitely* going to utterly *clean-up* the night-life of London, and the *sole* fruit and blossom of four years' *hysterical* cleaning is that the police are in a *septic* mess, my dear it 's *rather* hilarious when you come to think of it, *half* Scotland Yard quite *swearing* before the Police Commission that the police are *too* impeccable and the other half *nose-deep* in the

most insanitary police scandals, and my dear *do* you remember how *poor* TERENCE O'CONNOR was *stamped upon* by HICKS for merely suggesting that a Metropolitan cop was *capable* of bribery, however, but meanwhile as for Home Affairs, of course you *might* say the Virgins' Vote came out of the Home Office though that was the PRIME really, and I can't think of anything else but the Shop Hours Act which had to be *rammed* down their throats and anyhow was the permanent *incarnation* of Dora, except that you *can* buy chocolates at a theatre now, but my dear it took *ten* years' yapping in the Press to get *that,* my dear that *Department,* it 's like an elephant giving birth to a *mouse, too* reluctant, anyhow my *next* question was *How* long has the H. S. been in charge of Home Affairs and *is* he satisfied with the *festering* condition of our *diseased* Betting Laws, only this *bigot* of a Clerk scratched out *both* festering and diseased which of course was the *entire* gist and *flavour* of the Question, well I appealed to the Speaker and he rejected the *whole* Question because he said it was asking for an expression of *opinion,* my dear *that's* the kind of *Roedean* regulation a public woman has to face, however I altered it to *Has* HICKS done anything during the last four years and does he *propose* to do anything during the next four *months* to reform and codify the B.L.'s, well my dear he *bleated* in the negative as usual, so I said *Doesn't* he think this *malarious* and *national* mess is *more* important than the

night-life of London, but my dear *too* mute, so the next day I did the same about the *Divorce* Laws and the Licensing Laws and I said *Will* the Right Hon. Sec. for *Home* Affairs take his mind off *Soho* and get down to the *Home,* because my dear *think* what a real he-fellow could have done in *four* years with *that* majority, so and then the other day I asked *Has* he considered the question of suppressing *Stag-hunting* and he said as usual there was *no* public demand, so then my dear I rather *lost* the little head and I *leaped* up and said *Will* the Right Honourable *Humbug* say if there is any public demand for prosecuting people who play the piano in *pubs,* well *then* darling there was the *most* vociferous scene and I had to *withdraw* Humbug, and now the Whips are at me and I 'm getting the *most* malevolent letters, however I 'm *too* undeterred because my dear the man 's a *menace,* and Haddock 's going to utterly *stand* for Twickenham as an Independent and *split* the Tory vote so as to *save* the nation from another Jixennium, *too* right, farewell now your rather *unpopular* Topsy.

LETTER XXIII

LOSES THE WHIP

Well Trix my rustic little lamb if you *only* knew how I sometimes envy you, *ignoring* the world's news, not caring a *twopenny* hoot about the *Gold* Standard or anything, and *merely* living for the death of the next fox, my dear I *do* see how elemental and satisfying it must be, whereas *here* am I darling *hip*-deep in *acrimony* and correspondence and brain-strain, my dear I *think* I told you how I had *words* with the Whips because I *would* put *sulphuric* Questions to the Right Honourable Hicks, well my dear they said I was *quite* undermining the Cabinet because the *whole* of the Cabinet utterly agreed with me but they thought it was *too* perilous to even discuss my pet questions *however* cardinal, so they wanted them all to be left in a state of purulent placidity till after the Election, my dear *too* pussilanimous, and *especially* it seems because of the *new* virgin voters, though my dear *why* they should think that *all* the flappers are *Nonconformists* and wouldn't like to see some sanitary *Betting* Laws for instance I *merely* can't imagine, however and of course they said that anyhow it was the *done* thing to treat Jix as a *joke* so I said that's *just* the danger because the man Hicks and his herd were *serious* menaces to the *character* of the race

and the *happiness* of the people, my dear *too* eloquent, my dear I do think my *ſtyle* is a bit more *dynamic* and fluid than it used to be, don't you, though of course what do you care, well anyhow darling they said if I put down *one* more *irreverent* Queſtion I should definitely *loſe* the Whip, but they said if I was honeyed and obedient I might be a Parliamentary Sec. or something in the *next* Parliament, and I *rather* gathered I should *probably* rise to Cabinet rank in the firſt few *weeks,* well darling poor shrinking doe though I am I did *not* propoſe to be bribed or brow-battered because my dear they knew *too* clearly what the little platform was when I was *elected,* not to mention my Haddock, so the next day I put down the *moſt* mutinous queſtions to *half* the Cabinet, I forget what about but *nearly* everything, and sure enough I got the *moſt* pompifical letter to say that in future I should *not* receive the *Party* Whip, my dear *too* paltry, so I wrote back tersely who *wants* your tiresome Whip, and my dear as a *matter* of fact it *is* rather a *boon* to be Whipleſs, because normally you have to get absolute *leave* to leave the House, and if they say you *can't* go out to dinner or anything my dear you *merely* can't, *too* galling, but *now* of course I *prance* out airily *whenever* inclined, cocking a *phantom* snook at the Whips as I pass darling, my dear *too* satisfactory.

However my dear what I *faintly* forgot was my obese and woolly-witted *conſtituency,* because of

course the faithful commons of Burbleton are *always* titilated to see their little Member in the papers, *whatever* she does, but my dear my *Executive* Committee, being all *quite* circular and mediæval were *too* unamused, because they said it meant they were practically *de*-franchised and anyhow it was giving Burbleton (West) a *bad* name, my dear *too* sensitive, and anyhow it 's *rather* a tender moment because everyone 's busy *adopting* candidates for this *promiscuous* General Election, and my dear it seems there 's a *toxic* clique on the Executive which is *beavering* away to have a *pursy* business man called *Poop* instead of me, my dear *too* rotund but merely *dripping* with dividends and bonds and things, so they 've been quite *nosing* about in what they call my *record,* my dear totting up my *divisions* and speeches and everything, and likewise of course, and my dear *this* is the *real* rankle, how much *money* I 've spent in the blood-sucking Borough, because *between* you and I darling we haven't spent *too* much, not *having* too much, and my dear it was an absolute *plank* in the little platform at the *Bye*-Election that they were *not* to regard me as a kind of *milch*-elephant like most of the Tories, because I said if you *must* have *clubs* and *bazaars* and *new* wings to the library and everything I 'm *too* throbbed about it but you 'll have to pay for them *yourselves*, because I said *my* motto and maxiom is *service* not *shekels,* so don't elect *me* if *what* you want is an animated *cash-box,* which

of course is *exactly* what they *do* want, and *that* my dear is going to be the *penultimate* bane of the *Conservative* Party, my dear they *expect* their Member to be a sort of *Fairy* Godmother, with birthdays *weekly,* however to continue the sombre story I was summoned to Burbleton to give an account of myself at a sort of *secret* Inquisition, where my dear it was hinted *too* nudely that I should have to *spend* better and behave more *balmily,* because my dear *another* complication is that now I 'm in such *swampy* odour with the Whips and Government the *Central* Office are *threatening* delicately that *funds* perhaps will *not* be forthcoming at the *next* Election like they did at the last, my dear *too* despotical, because *that* of course has *radically* shaken some of my orbicular Committee, so that what with everything unless I become both *rich* and respectable it *rather* looks as if the *next* Member will be Sir *Horace* Poop, who sells bowler-hats and hose darling and *already* I gather has *busily* manured the entire constituency with *life*-subscriptions and *new* wings and has *quite* sworn to build chapels and wash-houses *all* over Burbleton, well of course it 's all *too* salubrious for Burbleton, but my dear what *is* the good of my poor little PRIME making those *sweet* speeches about yearning for *Youth* in the Party if any mature but *mindless* merchant is allowed to *buy* a constituency with *two* chapels and a public *lavatory?*

However my dear I *faced* up to them after

dinner like a hen-bison at bay darling in the *arresting* black-and-gold I told you about, and Haddock says looking *rather* like the Queen of Sheba at the *first* Solomon party, anyhow whether it was the frock, my dear there 's the *phantom* touch of a *hoop* in the skirt which gives a *dominant* effect but at the same time rather a *nun-like* note, if you know what I mean, and I carried a fan for imperious *gestures,* well I told them tersely my *compassionate* opinion about them and the Poop creature, and I said If you *want* a dead hatter *have* Horace by all means, and if you want a live Member behold your *immutable* Topsy, but *don't* expect any free sewers or public brine-baths from *me,* well don't you think I was *right* darling?

Anyhow my dear a little on the *cowed* side they agreed to a sort of *armistice,* and I think all would have been well, only *meanwhile* my dear I've made the *most* luminous but *alienating* speech in the House, my dear we had a debate about Afghanistan and that *fatiguing* Ullah family, well you *wouldn't* understand darling but it was all about *black* men wearing bowler-hats and *trousers,* well my dear I *rose* up and said there ought to be an *absolute* law of the League of Nations to stamp out the trouser traffic, and I said all these *missionaries* and people ought to be *too* discouraged who go about the fair places of the earth spreading *plus* fours and *braces* and celluloid collars, because my dear it *only* means

that the *blameless* black man gets *tuberculosis* and a *swelled* head, my dear if you could *see* some of the nigger-girls in Jamaica *covered* with face-powder and pink cotton tea-gowns, my dear *too* unsuitable, well I 'll tell you more later, but my dear *when* I tell you that Burbleton *mainly* exists by exporting bowler-hats and trousers and other *degrading* garments to the innocent blacks you 'll understand that I 've *rather* inserted the pretty little foot again, and you 'll also gather the *kind* of bunkers which beset the course of an *independent* girl *not* constructed to pattern, my dear the *only* thing these days is to be *mass-produced,* farewell now your *excommunicated* little TOPSY.

LETTER XXIV

TROUBLE IN THE HOUSE

TRIX my sweet bosom this is going to be rather a *difficult* letter, yes I *know* it 's a long while since the last one anyhow, but *don't* be carbolic with me, because my dear the *fact* is, O gosh I can't tell you even *now,* well as a *matter* of fact, I 've been *deceiving* you for some time, because my dear I don't know why but I *merely* couldn't tell you, and even now the very *ink* is blushing, well darling the *truth* is I *am* going to have *twins,* well when I say twins the doctor doesn't *know* for certain, but I 've told him it *is* twins *definitely* because I 've always said it would be didn't I darling, anyhow don't be alarmed because it isn't for *years* yet, but my dear it is rather radiant and embarassing *isn't* it, of course I know it 's happened to *herds* of other people but somehow it didn't seem quite like *me,* and my dear the whole thing seems to me rather old-world and *gauche,* don't you think, because what *is* the good of all this *science* and stuff, my dear *have* you read about EINSTEIN's *new* theory, well of course *nobody* understands it, but it seems he 's reducing the *whole* of Nature to about *one* formula my dear *x* equals *y* or something because he 's proved that *nearly* everything is *quite* the same, well my dear *electricity 's* the same as *gravity* and Space is *merely* another name

for *Time,* though my dear we did *not* need a German to tell us *that* because haven't we *always* talked about *knocking* a man into the middle of next *week* and everything, and of course you *know* darling *don't* you that you're nothing but a *bundle* of atoms like a table or an ash-tray, so I *suppose* an ash-tray is a bundle of *nerves* like *us,* however my dear *what* I was going to say was that in spite of all this brainery and simplification of the Universe and everything it seems *just* as complex to become a mother as *ever* it was, my dear it's *just* like these *motors* well they can invent a car which does *250* in the heart of the *Sahara* but has to be *towed* on a Christian road, but my dear as for anything *useful* like a *self*-starter which will *start* itself or a wind-screen wiper which will *wipe* the wind-screen for *more* than a minute, my dear not a *hope.*

However my dear one day I suppose we shall be able to step *lightly* into the *fourth* dimension and have babies by algebra with *no* trouble to anyone, but meanwhile darling I've *quite* vowed that I'm *not* going to *crumple* up and disappear *months* too early like the best-bred mothers, because my dear these *poor* proletarians have to continue functioning till the last moment *don't* they, so why not *me,* well my dear I was determined to *cling* to the House as long as feasible, however what's *rather* confused things is that meanwhile darling as perhaps you've seen I've been *confined* in the Clock Tower, *no* darling *no* don't leap

to conclusions, I mean *shut* up, *incarcerated,* it 's a parliamentary expression, yes I know it all sounds a muddle but that 's *juſt* what it is, but my dear forbear a brief space and all shall be plain, where was I, well my dear I suppose this twin-business may have made me the leaſt bit *hyſterical* and balloon-witted lately, anyhow I told you about my trouble with the Whips and the Party popes at Burbleton, and of course seeing the *legions* of the male massing *more* and more againſt me did *not* tend to placify the combatious little soul, well my dear one day there was a debate about Unemployment and my dear juſt before I 'd shown my *attractive* little Bill to the Clerk at the Table about *making* the L.C.C. have a boat-service on the Thames, which of course is one of Haddock's pet notions and would make *quantities* of work in a small way, anyhow *that* darling is the *kind* of thing that *somebody* ought to do only of course all these *diſtended* old men have such *rows* of good reasons for *not* doing anything, well the Clerk said my Bill was *frivolously* expressed *and* out of order, so my dear I was *so* saturated with the Government and the mediæval male generally that in the *middle* of the debate I *pranced* across the floor and made the *moſt* spontaneous and lyrical speech from the *Labour* benches, well my dear on *that* subject we *quite* harmonise so *why* not say so, anyhow sensation darling and an *absolute* ovation from the Opposition, well after that I *again* took my wiſtful Bill

to the Clerk and he *again* spurned it, my dear *too* polite of course but I 'm *sorry* to say that what with my speech and the twins and everything I *suddenly* saw scarlet and *smote* the man in the face with the said Bill *ferociously,* my dear *too* unrestrained, and it wasn't even *typed* which perhaps made it worse.

Well darling the SPEAKER saw the barbarous act, so of course I was *named* and *suspended* and *expelled* and everything, and what was *rather* poignant my *pet* WINSTON had to *move* the motion which he *quite* detested, however *there* I was my dear the *first* girl Member to be suspended, which you *might* say would be about enough for one woman, only of course you *don't* understand the effect of *twins* darling, and besides it 's *too* clear that the *one* way to get things done is to *give* trouble, because my dear the *next* day everyone was saying that I was *too* right about the Thames Boats and the Unemployment Loan and things and I now hear the L.C.C. are at last *stirring* in their sleep, anyhow that afternoon I don't *quite* know why darling but I proceeded *casually* to the House after Questions, *tripped* past the policeman and *took* my seat, my dear *too* unsubordinate, because *that* of course was absolute *contempt* and flouting of the *august* authority and everything, so my dear *quite* rightly I was *committed* for contempt, *arrested* by the Serjeant-at-Arms and *deposited* in the Clock Tower, my dear up *496* stairs *right* under Big Ben in the *most*

Arctic and carpetless little room where it seems *nobody* 's been put since a man called Labby, but only for the afternoon my dear to break the little spirit I gather, because of course in these days they 'd get *no* servant to carry the meals up 496 stairs, and my dear *one* night of those *revolting* bells just above the bed would send *anyone* moony, so in the evening I was confined in a *civilised* room at the bottom of the Tower till I *purged* my contempt with apologies at the Bar and so forth.

Well darling by this time I was beginning to *somewhat* regret the girlish impetuosity, and I wasn't quite sure that it was all *too* good for the twins, which by the way my dear *nobody* knew about, because so far as usual I 've managed to be *too* unusual, so I confess I had a *slight* sob when Haddock came to see me, however my dear torments *and* scorpions could not induce me to *humbly* apologise before *700* male legislators, so on the second day I sent a *polite* note to the Speaker to say I should *never* grovel and I was *too* sorry but if I wasn't released *forthwith* I should linger there tenaciously and have *twins* in the Clock Tower, which would make the Mother of Parliaments look ridiculous for *quite* ever.

Well my dear the result was *utter* panic in the high places, I believe they had a *special* Cabinet Meeting, my doctor was sent for, and my dear I was released *forthwith* with *no* purgings or apologies or anything, though of course I 'm still

totally suspended, *rather* a triumph for the lone female don't you think darling, because it *does* show that we have ſtill an argument or two with which to pulverise the brutal male, though on the other hand the *twins* perhaps show up rather a *weakness* in the female *politically* because now I suppose I shall have to abandon the seat whether they want me or not and *dedicate* the promising life to motherhood, no more now darling your little blossom 's *rather* faded and HADDOCK 's going to read to me something suitable out of KEATS, HADDOCK by the way darling is *quite* too aprehensive about becoming a father but is bearing up bravely, farewell fond one your at laſt *intereſting* TOPSY.

LETTER XXV

DOES NEEDLEWORK

Well Trix my distant delight I 'm *rather* afraid that this will be *about* the last letter you 'll have for a *long* time, not that *you* 'll care, my dear from some of the *obstruse* things you say I believe you *skip* my profoundest passages, anyhow darling the twins are *definitely* in the offing though *rather* reluctant, my dear it 's *too* protracted and wearing, there 's been some *gauche* error about the *date* and we 've had a nurse in the house for a *whole* fortnight, my dear the *expense* not to mention the conversation, my dear the *torture,* because of course she 's a pearl of a person, *quite* placid and fussless, and I know will be a *complete* angel once one 's in bed, only my dear you know what they are in the small-talk department and the *dear* thing *bubbles* on about nothing but *births* and deaths and *major* operations, with *all* the details and complications, my dear *too* technical, and of course she has the *most* Belgravian connection, my dear she 's ushered *half* the peerage on to the planet, so that *what* I don't know about the insides of the aristocracy and their *habits* in the home, my dear the first week we went through the *whole* list daily, till I felt *too* intimate with people I 've *never* set eyes on, my dear I could tell you things about the

Black Duchess's internal arrangements which she doesn't know *herself, rather* macaber darling well don't you agree?

Well that was the *first* week, and *then* my dear we began on *hospital* shop, my dear I know the names and hobbies of *all* the doctors and half the nurses, likewise my dear the *frailest* phantom of a scandal or two, and of course I 've *quite* fallen for a *magnetic* doctor called Bobble or something who 's Nurse's Apollo, does *radiobology* and sounds *irresistible,* and meanwhile my dear I 've learned *masses* of Latin and all these *gruesome* initials they have in hospitals, my dear B.I.D. is a *Brought In Dead,* and B.B.A. means *Born* Before Arrival, yes it *sounds* difficult my dear but it *merely* means that some *careless* infant arrives before the nurse does, though *that* as Haddock said might be better than a case of Born *weeks* after arrival, and of course the *peak* and climax was to-day when my dear the *divine* thing picked up some paper and saw Haddock's initials, and my dear she murmured *Oh* yes, Funny, that 's Ante Partum Hæmorrhage, my dear I *don't* know much Latin but Haddock says at the present crisis that *particular* remark was *too* unsuitable, so my dear *what* with all this and *periodical* panics about the twins you 'll understand that the *taut* little nerves are faintly on the *frayed* side, and of course we 've *quite* got operations and things on the *brain,* my dear the other day Haddock was *dreamily* carving a chicken when suddenly he said,

Will you have the *femur* darling or a bit off the *tibia major,* my dear *too* alarming.

Well my dear *try* to imagine the *jading* nature of everything, however we smile *darkly* through our tears darling, only I *can't* believe that this sort of thing is much of an *encouragement* to the twins, oh of course and that 's *another* worry, my dear *nobody* but me believes that it *is* twins, not even the doctor, well he 's *too* nebulous and my dear *most* people seem to think I 'm being *amusing* about it, my dear *too* likely, and anyhow I *never* can understand why twins should be *funny,* my dear I think it 's the *most* economical and *disarming* arrangement, however *knowing* I 'm right I 've been perfectly firm and we 're *madly* organising *two* of *everything,* because *that* is the practical point after all, but my dear they *actually* wanted to *wait* and *see,* because it seems that 's the done thing in dubious cases, however, the idea of the *tragical* other one with *quite* nothing to wear was *too* much for *this* tender heart, so here I sit *needle-working,* my dear the *most* laughable little socks and things about the size of *egg-covers,* at least Nurse and Mum do most of it because knittery was never my strongest suit and I drop *so* many stitches and things that my *pathetic* garments look more like *nets,* of course one thing we 've got against the twins is that they 've *rather* brought Mum back into our lives, my dear you know I 'm *too* filial, but of course she and poor Haddock are like the grater

and the cheese, and my dear having just been made *Vice*-President of a Maternity Centre she thinks she's *practically* a doctor and is *quite* burgeoning with advice and theories, and my dear everything she says reminds Nurse of some *grisly* anecdote about a *local* anæsthetic or the Black Duchess's *liver* or something, and of course they both rather *resent* each other so they have the *most* protracted *obstetrical* battles over my suffering little body, my dear I could *yell* sometimes and the *sole* silencer I have is to make Haddock read to me out of KEATS and DICKENS and WINSTON and people and sometimes one of those *flawless* little *short* leaders in *The Times,* because my dear I want the twins to be *too* litterary, and of course *whenever* there's anything about the Tribe of HICKS I have it read *over* and *over* again because they must be *born* rebels in that department, only Mum is rather a Hicksophil because of the POPE, so she *will* interrupt with one of her *clinical* remarks and then Haddock looks *beetles* at her, and my dear the *atmosphere* is *too* unmotherly.

Well darling I don't know if all this gives you any kind of a *picture* of your little blossom's tribulations, but if so have a *quiet* little cry for me won't you, of course as I've *told* Haddock if the twins survive *this* they'll be *quite* supermen, well there's *no* more news I think, I see the House is still *feebly* functioning without me, my dear the bizarre thing is that I find myself

rather itching to be back in it, my dear it 's like a *drug,* however of course I 'm ſtill *totally* suspended, though I expect after the twins I shall be re-admitted and everything, because that 's juſt the kind of *sweet* but rather *sloppy* thing they do do, however meanwhile I get one of my bosoms there to put down my *daily* Queſtion to the man Hicks, my dear I 've juſt done a *dazzling* one about *gas-ovens,* my dear it 's to ask him *whether* his attention has been called to the number of people who *commit* suicide by putting their heads in *gas-ovens,* whether it is not the case that *more* people perish from gas-ovens than from alcohol, and if he will take ſteps for the *prohibition* of gas-ovens or anyhow have *licences* for them and *rows* of *aſtringent* regulations, Oh and of course I 've forgotten to tell you about my *divine* Society, my dear I did tell you once that there are *261* Societies all *beavering* away for Prohibition and such-like *alien* atrocities, and somebody 's sent me a sort of *catalogue* of them which has *marked* fun-value, my dear they have the *moſt* baroque and *buffoonable* names, my dear there 's the United Kingdom Alliance for the Total Suppreſſion of the Liquor Traffic by the *Will* of the People, well *there* 's a sweet little nickname for you, and the Society for the *Study* of *Inebriety,* which runs a paper called the *British* Journal of Inebriety, my dear can you *see* the old darlings somewhere in Portland Place all *morbidly* ſtudying *inebriety,* I suppose they *meet* on Boat-Race

Night, however then there 's the *United* Order of the *Total* Abſtinent *Sons* of the Phœnix, and the *Juvenile* Rechabites, and the *Wigan* Parent Total Abſtinence Society, and the *World* Prohibition Federation, and the National British Women's Total Abſtinence Union, which has a paper called *White Ribbon and Wings,* oh and *herds* more only I 'm too tired now darling, well of course in this world *anybody* may be right, but my dear the queſtion *does* arise, *can* anybody who can *solemnly* give themselves names like *that* be right about *anything,* and of course it 's *too* easy to laugh but with all you *flappers* getting the vote *quite* anything may happen, anyhow the *point* is that I 'm founding the *moſt* magical Society called *Topsy's Own,* only of course it has a *superb* long name as well, since that 's the done thing, my dear it 's Topsy's Own Society for the *Propagation* of the Sense of *Humour* and Proportion and for the *Increase* of *Innocent* Pleasure and Joy among the People, and my dear *you* shall be a Vice-President, O dear I 'm shattered and weary and I *suppose* you think I 'm a *wee* bit hyſterical, well maybe I am, but if *you 'd* heard what Nurse has *juſt* told Mum about *what* happened to Connie Fitlow so would *you* be darling, no more now, pray for me, your rather *terrified* little Topsy.

LETTER XXVI

BECOMES A MOTHER

WELL Trix my poor spinster *here* I am a British matron at last, thanks be, looking *pale* and ethereal on the snowy pillow, and *here* they are my dear two *revolting* little bundles of *thick* white flannel, *two* darling yes because of *course* I was right, my dear if *only* the world would take me seriously *instead* of treating me as an *irrelevant* bubble, however it 's boy and girl, as *like* as two electrons, and the *whole* tribe thriving and buoyant, *even* my poor Haddock who my dear is *much* more dilapidated than any of the party, though of course he merely *fled* out into a taxi during the actual proceedings, told the man to drive *round* and round London, and my dear what with the *protracted* fussery and vacilation of it all he fell *fast* asleep in the cab and *woke* up, like BYRON or somebody, to find himself a father and *five* pounds seventeen and eightpence on the clock!

Well my dear whatever I say, and of course you know I *can't* blow froth about these *embarassing* events, but as a matter of fact I suppose it is *rather* a throb and land-mark in the little life, but my dear *don't* think that I 'm going to be one of those *wallowing* mothers who make one blush *right* down the back to hear them *speak* of

their young, because *quite* definitely the twins are *perfectly* revolting, my dear the *most* amorphous and *unfinished* little objects, my dear mere *studies* as the artists say, and my dear Haddock stands over them and sort of *mutters* dumbly, my dear *too* mystified, as if he was thinking O *gosh* did *I* do that, which I expect he is, though of course he tells me daily that they're *quite* exquisite and then *flies* out of the room, well my dear when you come down for the christening if I *once* tell you they're exquisite or anything in their present condition you shall have *three* new *frocks,* my dear they're *grotesque,* however I must say they have *rather* heart-rending little *toy* hands, my dear *too* pathetic, like a *fairy* frog's, and of course *delicious* little tuffets of hair, *coal-black* darling which was *rather* a shock to your tawny little friend, however Nurse tells me it will all be changed, but my dear it's *too* extraordinary to see how the *character* comes out already, because my dear the boy is an absolute *replica* of Haddock, of course the *eyes* are mine but you can see the germs of the Haddock nose *too* manifest though I *rather* hope that it won't spread to the girl, and my dear I know you'll think I've gone *soupy* suddenly, but honestly the *first* words the boy said, well not *words* precisely, but the nurse took it away from me and my dear it *clenched* the little frog-fists, *frowned* ferociously and made the *most* mutinous noise, my dear I *swear* it said *Jix*, *too* uncanny but *rather* encour-

aging because there 's *no* doubt that it 's going to be the absolute *hope* and HAMPDEN of the twentieth century, well the *girl* on the other hand is I *quite* think going to be *musical,* my dear she 's *too* intelligent and has those *long* tapering *piano*-fingers, well of course not *now* exactly but you can *see* them coming, and my dear she 's *too* sensitive to *sound* and rhythm and everything because the *moment* Haddock puts on the gramophone the *sagacious* little eyes open and she 's taking the *whole* thing in, and my dear her *pet* record seems to be a *Symphony* or something by a Belgian or somebody, which Haddock says is a *little* significant, so my plans are rather to finish her off with *two* years' concentrated music in *Paris,* though of course Haddock wants her to go to Oxford and take *Law.*

However we needn't decide that *yet,* and *now* darling about the *names, about* which we 've had some rather *umbrageous* arguments, however I 've told Haddock that as you were to be the principal godmother you ought to have a sort of *casting* vote, *assuming* of course darling that you cast on *my* side, well Haddock began with the *most* un-Parliamentary suggestions, my dear he wanted to call them *TRIX* and *JIX*, to sort of *allegorise* my public career, but rather hard on the boy I thought, so I suggested Sherry and Soda, to symbolise *his,* rather sweet don't you think, and he retorted with Sausage and *Mash,* and *Sankey* and Moody, and *Derry* and Tom and Adam and Eve,

my dear the naming of twins would be an *inspired* paper-game for one of those *facetious* house-parties, however Haddock suddenly went all fastidious and now he 'll have nothing but *hot-house* names, like *Tristram* and Iseult and *Geraint* and Enid and Coral and Amber and *June* and January, my dear *too* aspic and fragile for me, because what *I* want is something *quite* normal and *unCadogan,* well William and Mary or *George* and Joan, however I 'm *rather* wedded to JACK and JILL, because I think Sir *John* Haddock sounds *too* tenacious and reliable don't you, well my dear *if* you agree you *might* send Haddock the *most* emphatic telegram, but if you don't don't bother, do you see darling?

Well my dear the Nurse is massing against me again, and your little song-bird is feeling *rather* droopy, besides I expect you 've had *quite* enough of my young, so no more now, by the way I 've *quite* decided that Jack will go to Winchester, a scholarship of *course,* and *then* I think *Oxford,* a little trip round the world and the *Bar* for fun, though of course it 's *too* obvious that he 's going to *write,* my dear if you could *see* the imagination in that *bulbous* little head, though my dear *how* we 're going to afford another writer in the home, however you 'll see at the christening, my dear if you *miss* it I merely *root* you out of my life, it 's *too* moving to think you 're going to linger in London a bit, because I shan't have to think every minute *Have* I written to that *vora-*

cious hen, by the way you might bring any old letters of mine with you because Haddock says they ought to be used as a *scourge* and pamphlet at this *dreary* Election and given to *quite* every elector, so that all these *cowering* candidates will have to at *last* face up to the Topsy Policy and *swear* to pass my flawless little Bills, my dear *did* I tell you that *since* the twins I've had the *sweetest* telegrams from the PRIME and the SPEAKER and absolute *entreaties* from Burbleton to stand again because the great heart of the people is *too* kindled and it seems that merely becoming a mother has put me right with the yams and loofahs, and besides they say the only Member who's just had twins is *certain* to hold the seat, however I don't think I shall because it's *too* discouraging, my dear what *can* one do, one's like a flea on an elephant, my dear Parliament's a *pachyderm* and always will be as long as *everyone* in it is *over* forty when the *soul* fossilises and you begin being *careful* about the body, *and* everything else, my dear this Democracy would be *too* satisfactory if the *young* did the governing and the *old* did the work, instead of vice versa, however at least I've left my mark upon *Burbleton,* because I hear my *dear* Councillor Mule has been doing *quite* marvels, my dear they have *music* in the Parks and *Sunday* Concerts and the pictures open and they're making a *mixed* Swimming Bath and *improving* the pubs and *cleaning* up the Licensing Justices and everything, so I

mean to be buried in *Brighter* Burbleton, my dear the *whole* town my *smiling* monument, and meanwhile I shall cherish and cultivate my *exquisite* babes, O gosh darling I owe you *three* frocks, farewell now your *misunderstood* little *matron* Topsy.

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